

# **WILL WAR COME TO INDIA ?**

**A WEEK-BY-WEEK RECORD OF THE  
FIRST TWO YEARS OF WORLD WAR II**

**BY**

**N. G. JOG**

**FOREWORD BY**

**THE RT. HON. DR. M. R. JAYAKAR, P. C.**

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# Foreword

WILL the War come to India? This is the question which is at present agitating the Indian mind, notwithstanding its general apathy about war affairs. The British Government having failed to adopt right methods to replace this apathy by an intelligent war-mindedness, it is difficult to induce Indians to study or even to take a lively interest in war affairs. It is, therefore, very creditable that the author found time to study the several stages of the war and to write so critically and lucidly about it.

The book appears before the Indian public none too soon. India was so long out of the war, so far as Indian sentiment was concerned. There is an old Sanskrit saying "diverting indeed are the tales of war" and it is with this feeling of distant and comfortable safety that Indians looked on the war and read or heard war news. But now the war is at their door-steps, with danger threatening from two ends. India's strategic frontiers are now around the Persian Gulf in the North-West, and on the gulf of Siam in the South-East and it is now officially announced that the defence of Egypt, Palestine and the whole position in the Middle East is the defence of India.

Whatever view one might take of the wisdom of drawing a poor country like India into the war without its consent, the fact is now undeniable that a stage has been reached when, the war being next door, a wise Government would correct its past errors, and make special efforts to enlist the willing co-operation of Indians in consolidating India's capacity and willing-

## WILL WAR COME TO INDIA ?

ness to defend herself by the powerful arm of her patriotic youth. This can be done only if Government follow the statesmanlike view, accepted at the Indian Round Table Conference, that the defence of India should in future be increasingly the concern of the Indian people. Though this sound principle has been practically ignored since the outbreak of the war, it is not yet too late for His Majesty's Government implicitly to accept it as the guiding rule of their future war activities in India. Simultaneously with such an effort on the part of Government, it will be necessary for Indians to acquire, in increasing measure, a correct and accurate knowledge of the events of the war, past, present and future, leading to a livelier sense of the issues involved in the success or failure of the cause of the Allies.

It is hoped that Mr. Jog's book will prove useful in this connection. He has evidently made a close study of international problems. His writings show a firm grasp of the strategy of the war as far as a stranger can study it from the main events. His presentation of the facts is critical and lucid and some of his shrewd forecasts have come true. His style is easy, and the reader can peruse the several chapters with as much pleasure as profit. The book is a collection of newspaper articles, written week by week, as the events were happening. It, therefore, lacks the continuity and coherence of a treatise containing a comprehensive *ex post facto* review of the entire vista of events, in which each incident is assigned its just place. But this feature, so far from lessening their value, makes the author's comments more interesting, as indicating how an intelligent Indian, though denied all opportunity of studying the war at close quarters, can form and present a vivid picture of the war, obtained from misty glimpses afforded by published war news, which, as we all know, is often scanty and propagandist. The author's description of the fall of France,

## FOREWORD

the unhappy role of Admiral Darlan, Mr. Eden's return to the British Foreign Office and Hitler's invasion of Russia will be found particularly interesting.

This is perhaps the first book of its type, written by an Indian for the benefit of Indians. I feel, therefore, great pleasure in contributing this Foreword. This is apart from the fact that I have enjoyed reading some of the chapters with a sense of vivid realism, as I happened to be in London when the incidents, narrated therein, took place, causing a vital turn in the varying fortunes of the war.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.R. Jayashankar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "M.R." at the top left and the last name "Jayashankar" written below in a larger, more stylized script.

# Preface

I DEDICATE to my readers the following record of the present war, which has appeared week by week in the Sunday edition of *The Bombay Chronicle*.

I had not the vaguest idea when I began these war reviews that they would ever be published in book form. It is only the keen interest evinced in them by numerous readers, most of them unknown to me, that has encouraged me to make a book out of them.

The following pages do not constitute a history of the war. They contain a rough chronicle of events as they crowded themselves on the canvas of history and my personal impressions of the war panorama as it was unfolding itself day after day. The chronicle may have to be corrected in the light of our present knowledge, but the impressions will remain for what they are worth.

By a curious coincidence I began these war reviews just when Hitler launched his Blitzkrieg. I called my first article on the invasion of Norway "Blitzkrieg Proves Boomerang".

It did!—To Allied statesmen who had begun to pity Hitler for having missed the bus. To generals who "were horribly grateful that they enjoyed seven months in which to perfect their armies." To the neutral nations who believed in business as usual, Hitler or no Hitler. To armchair strategists, who were confident of defeating the Nazis by counting the barrels of oil, which they did not possess; not to talk of humble commentators like myself who were fed for seven long months on the dope from the above-mentioned sources.

The historian of the future will solemnly record that Germany invaded Denmark and Norway in the

## PREFACE

early hours of April 9, 1940, and occupied them after defeating the Allied Expeditionary Forces. This bald fact is, no doubt, important, but the mass of fiction through which it slowly and painfully emerged has also an abiding interest for the future.

Only a contemporary chronicle like this can recapitulate that pleasant fiction, that smug complacency, that false optimism and that bitter disillusion of those none-too-distant days. It is exactly here where it scores over history as we know it. Sometimes it is misinformed. Sometimes it is out of focus. Sometimes the events are telescoped. Sometimes it has to be written with one's tongue in the cheek. Nevertheless it always remains fresh, vivid, faithful like a photographic plate.

I say this in spite of the fact that I am keenly aware of the shortcomings of this volume. The reader will, however, kindly note that these reviews were written on a particular day of the week, in the hurry and bustle of a newspaper office and with an eye on the creed machine forever tapping out Reuter's cables. It sometimes happened that a news item on which comments were based when I began an article was flatly contradicted before I had reached its end, thus suddenly upsetting my nicely arranged apple cart! The only thing I could do under such circumstances was to tie the loose ends as best as I could: Time, Tide and the Press wait for none.

It may be pointed out also that this book has been written over a period of seventeen months, thus making certain repetitions unavoidable and raising a crop of cliches! I myself became conscious of them only while preparing the manuscript for the press. I have endeavoured to delete the former and to dig out the latter; otherwise the record remains exactly as it was originally written. Only the introductory chapter has been specially written for this book.

## WILL WAR COME TO INDIA ?

My grateful thanks are due to the Rt. Hon. Dr. M. R. Jayakar for sparing time to contribute a valuable Foreword to this book; to Mr. S. A. Brelvi, the Editor of *The Bombay Chronicle* for allowing me to publish these reviews in a book form; to my colleagues R. K. Prabhu, R. S. Padbidri, M. A. Basit and K. A. Abbas for corrections and criticisms; to Mr. D. T. Mahajan for going over the manuscript helpfully; and finally to Leela Jog for constantly urging me to bring out this book—and to begin another. I began this Preface with a dedication to my readers; I end it with a threat!

*The Bombay Chronicle,*

Bombay,

September 3, 1941

N. G. JOG

## CONTENTS

		Page
INTRODUCTORY	.. .. ..	5
I. BLITZKRIEG BEGINS <i>(April 12 to May 17, 1940)</i>	.. .. ..	17
II. FALL OF FRANCE <i>(May 24 to July 5)</i>	.. .. ..	39
III. THAT INVASION! <i>(July 12 to October 4)</i>	.. .. ..	69
IV. DAVID AGAINST GOLIATH <i>(October 11 to December 6)</i>	.. .. ..	99
V. SECOND ROMAN EMPIRE R.I.P. <i>(December 13, 1940 to January 24, 1941)</i>	.. .. ..	132
VI. SWASTIKA OVER BALKANS <i>(January 31 to March 7)</i>	.. .. ..	154
VII. BATTLE OF ATLANTIC <i>(March 14 to May 9)</i>	.. .. ..	177
VIII. THE SKY Vs. THE SEA <i>(May 16 to June 20)</i>	.. .. ..	211
IX. INVASION OF RUSSIA <i>(June 27 to August 29)</i>	.. .. ..	242
APPENDIX: A DIARY OF THE WAR <i>(Sept. 3, 1939 to Sept. 2, 1941)</i>	.. .. ..	294



*Heute gehoert uns Deutschland,  
Morgen die ganze Welt.\**

—HITLER-JUGEND

THE lamps did not go out all over Europe (as they did in 1914, in the historic words of Sir Edward Grey) when the Prime Minister announced in a broadcast from 10, Downing Street, at 11-15 in the morning of Sunday, the 3rd of September, 1939, that Britain was once again at war with Germany. They were carefully, almost cheerfully, blacked out.

To Neville Chamberlain it was a bitter blow that all his long struggle to win peace had failed, as he confessed in his speech that day. The rest of the democratic world, however, welcomed the declaration of hostilities with resignation, almost with relief. Whatever the future might have in store, the intolerable tension of the war of nerves was at last over. We were sick of the ever-recurring crises, of the endless alarms and excursions of the last few years. The "evil things", which the Prime Minister said Britain would be fighting against, were not half so evil as the world had suffered during the preceding era of appeasement. Now it was a straight fight between Fascism and Democracy.

Historians were delving for two decades into the archives of European chancellories to find out the real causes of World War I. They will be spared all such trouble in the case of World War II. They are epitomised in the person of Rudolf Schicklgruber, who was born at Braunau in Austria on the 20th of April, 1889, and who later became world-famous as

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\*To-day Germany is ours; To-morrow the whole world.

Adolf Hitler, the Fuehrer of the German Reich. Behind him stand, for the present, 85 million Germans, the so-called *Herrenvolk*, who have been doped, nursed or dragooned into the ranks of National Socialism.

Dr. Hugh Dalton has observed in a memorable phrase that "Hitler wanted war, as another man might want a woman." Not, I may add, as a normal man wants a woman. He would neither court nor even seduce but would rather ravish. He has transformed his pathological sadism into a political fine art. Twenty-seven years ago Adolf Hitler, then an unknown recruit to a Bavarian Infantry Regiment, was "so overcome by a storm of enthusiasm" when he heard that Germany was at war, that he fell on his knees and thanked Heaven from an overflowing heart!

The despatch rider of 1914 had become the supreme dictator of Germany in 1939. He had no longer any reason to thank Heaven for the Second World War. He had only to pat his own back for that long-sought consummation. Nobody in Europe wanted war then, neither Chamberlain nor Daladier, least of all Stalin. On the 8th of August, 1939, Winston Churchill said—he was merely a pain in the neck of appeasers then!—"If Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war. No one is going to make war."

Herr Hitler did want war. Not through the normal channels, however. Nothing so ridiculous for him as a formal ultimatum. The dive-bombers were far more efficacious than diplomatic *demarches*. True, the latter, accompanied by ceremonial hectoring at Berchtesgaden, had given him one victory after another from Rhineland to Memelland. But the Fuehrer was sated with those bloodless conquests. He felt cheated out of his real triumph. He was tired with those appeasers, who would never say No to him.

They hummed and hawed and haggled only to surrender like a well-drilled courtesan just when he was ready for his tiger-spring.

Hitler is said to have wondered why the world considered Munich as his victory. On the contrary, he felt "angry and frustrated"! He was therefore taking no chances with his Polish affair. No more those endless discussions and tiresome blusterings. He knew what he wanted. He knew *how* he wanted it. He itched and ached for war and he would have it. He made the amazing declaration to Sir Neville Henderson eight days before his invasion of Poland that "he was now fifty years old and preferred war now to when he was fifty-five or sixty."

He therefore gave no opportunity to anybody to appease him and those who have read the British Ambassador's first-hand account of those hectic days can see for themselves with what diabolical cunning he set the stage for the invasion. The Polish Government was not given any scope or even occasion to discuss the issues at stake. They were not allowed either to agree or disagree to Hitler's terms until the actual hour of attack on the 1st of September, 1939.

Two long and tortuous days had to elapse before the British Government handed the ultimatum to Germany as it was bound to do under the terms of the Anglo-Polish Pact. The French Government gave the Wilhelmstrasse five hours more still. Hitler had no time to consider those ultimatums. He was already issuing his grandiloquent war communiques from the Fuehrer's Headquarters on the Eastern Front. It was his day—*Der Tag!*

It was war. We were prepared for the worst. Military Cassandras were telling us for years that the new Total War would be a war of annihilation. Its declaration would be like the eruption of a volcano blotting out of existence whatever came in its path. London, Paris and Berlin, we feared, would be

immediately bombed and gassed. Nothing happened that night. Nor the night after. Not even the night after that. London slept peacefully. Berlin received nothing worse than a few showers of an ill-conceived and badly-drafted "Note to the German people". And Paris, it is said, was not even properly blacked out during the first few nights.

It was exceedingly strange, however, in view of the all quiet which was soon to descend on the Western Front, that the French troops there should have established contact with the enemy the very next day of the declaration of war. They penetrated the German frontier as early as September 7 and it was reported on the 10th instant that 350 square miles of enemy territory were occupied by them. By the 17th of September regular artillery duels were begun all over the front. The initial French progress was maintained until the middle of October, when the Germans launched an attack in force east of the Moselle and advanced as far as Apache, just within the French frontier.

The first divisions of the British Expeditionary Force landed on French soil on September 12. Within another month 158,000 men and 25,000 vehicles were transported to France without the loss of a single life, though the British soldiers did not take over their zone of the Front until early December when the King made a tour of the Maginot Line.

Heavy rains fell in many parts of the Western Front on October 19 and as the weather conditions gradually deteriorated, the situation began to pass into a stalemate. Occasional dog-fights took place in the air and reconnaissance skirmishes were reported now and then. But this was all the activity on the Western Front during the first eight months of war. Believe it or not, in the first three months of the greatest war in world history, the number of dead of both the Allies did not exceed 3,400 on land, sea and

in air. The British casualties on the Western Front up to the end of 1939 amounted to 24 wounded, 13 killed and 1 missing, while in September alone 1,130 persons died in Britain by traffic accidents !

The question naturally arises why the Allies after taking the initiative on the Western Front should have soon passed into a do-nothing, "sitzkrieg" strategy. Why did they not strike with all their might and main while the German Army was fully occupied in Poland? Why did they allow Hitler not only to conduct a victorious, one-front war but also to recuperate and make good his losses subsequently?

Possibly, none else than Maurice Gamelin, then the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces and now languishing in a military prison somewhere in France, can provide a satisfactory reply to those pertinent issues. Gamelin was Joffre's favourite staff officer and served with great distinction in the last war. Since then his rise was rapid and he had established almost a legendary reputation by 1939—a reputation which none of his British opposites could challenge. He had the complete backing both of Daladier and Chamberlain,—of the former owing to personal ties and political reasons and of the latter probably because the "sitzkrieg" appeared as a counsel of perfection to his cautious City constitution. Had he not himself taken the earliest opportunity after the opening of hostilities to admonish his critics, who were demanding action, that "his Government would not be rushed into adventures that offered little prospect of success and were calculated, by impairing our resources, to postpone ultimate victory"?

There was, however, a dissident voice in this Garden of Eden. Mr. Hore Belisha, Britain's Secretary of State for War, made a tour of the Maginot Line in December. It was not exactly what is called a conducted tour and he is reported to have asked a

number of inconvenient questions regarding the extension of the fortifications towards the East. The Allied Generalissimo did not relish those criticisms of a mere civilian and protested against them to the latter's Chief. Result: the Prime Minister promptly sacked his War Minister as he had formerly sacked his foreign Minister and First Lord of the Admiralty to placate Mussolini and Hitler respectively.

And so between the end of the White War on the 3rd of September, 1939, and the beginning of the Crimson War on the 9th of April, 1940, intervenes a period of what was known as the Phoney War. This was a bastard offspring of Mars but none the less deadly for that. Its effects were insidious, all-pervading, utterly demoralising. While the home-sick, young soldiers kicking their heels on the Maginot Line were being daily injected with the poison of Dr. Goebbels (*Frenchmen! Where are the British?—They are sleeping with your wives!*) a regiment of elderly economists was busy counting the tons of ore and the barrels of oil which the Nazis did not possess and whose absence would gradually but relentlessly lead to the Reich's ultimate strangulation. *As simple as A B C, my deah!*

The Government offices and factories were working and observing the Sabbath as usual. They were mostly busy producing red-tape and wool—to pull over public eyes! While the number of unemployed actually rose by 172,000 in the first three months of war, cushy jobs were to be had for the asking in this auxiliary service or that for the ladies of rank or connection. Rationing was not introduced until the 8th of January, and the even tenor of British life was hardly disturbed for the first six months of the war. Nevertheless, even the minor restrictions and inconveniences were being bitterly criticised. Civil servants were unhappy in their new resorts; evacuated mothers were fed up with the country; and the Lon-

doners, after admiring the unknown beauty of the moon for a few nights, began to grumble loudly against the black-outs. Said the Premier in reprimand, "Personally, I'd sooner be bored rather than bombed."

It was a glorious time for the Cliveden Set. No longer were they accused as appeasers; nor were they yet branded as "Guilty Men". Even self-confessed Fascists like Sir Oswald Mosley were having a merry innings. The Prime Minister had reached the apogee of his prestige and power and he boasted before an admiring audience on April 4 that "After seven months of war, I feel ten times as confident of victory as I did at the beginning." He had the hardihood to repeat that confidence even after Hitler had swallowed Denmark and occupied half of Norway. His Ministers were enjoying the heyday of their career—and making hay of the war. They were bubbling with blithe assurances and prodigal of pep talks.

Let me give a few prize quotations:—Sir Kingsley Wood, the Air Minister, on October 10, "Our latest fighters are definitely better than their German counterparts. The present great production of aeroplanes is being doubled." Again on March 7, "The output of aircraft now accruing to us and to France is today in excess of that of Germany." Mr. R. H. Cross, the Minister of Economic Warfare, on October 25, "Nearly all her overseas sources of supply are now cut off from Germany." General Sir Edmund Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on April 5, "The Allies should be heartily grateful that they enjoyed seven months in which to perfect their armies....We are now amply prepared!"

One is constrained to note that even so lynx-eyed and prophetic a soul as Winston Churchill seems to have been temporarily lulled into a false sense of strength and security during this phoney phase of war. A few quotations should suffice to bear out this remark.

As First Lord of the Admiralty he remarked as early as November 8, 1939, that Britain was getting definite mastery of the U-boat attack. Four days later he made the amazing observation in the House of Commons, "I have this feeling, that the Germany which assaults us all to-day is a far less strongly-built and solidly-founded organism than that which the Allies and the United States forced to beg for armistice 21 years ago. I have the sensation and also the conviction that that evil man over there and his cluster of confederates are not sure of themselves, *as we are sure of ourselves.*" And finally as late as May 8, 1940, he believed while reviewing the disastrous campaign in Norway that "nevertheless, the advantages rest substantially with us." Indeed, in that historic Parliamentary debate he had virtually constituted himself, in the caustic phrase of Mr. Lloyd George, the air raid shelter of his Chief and colleagues in the Cabinet. One of the greatest tragedies of this war is that Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, had to spend eight months in repairing the failings and undoing the follies in which Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had complaisantly acquiesced during the previous eight months.

This fatal self-complacency and preening over-optimism had spread and seeped everywhere. Nowhere was it more marked, however, than in Britain's relations with her Ally. The British Government seems to have been utterly blind to the internal conditions of France before and after the war began. That unhappy nation was finally knocked out of the fight on June 17 thanks to Marshal Petain, but long before that it was being gradually sucked into the quicksands of defeatism and Fascism. While the non-aggression pact between Stalin and Hitler had tragically misled a large number of workers and intellectuals into apathy and even opposition towards the war, German propaganda was assiduously direct-

ed towards seducing the propertied classes, the ambitious politicians and the scheming generals.

Daladier was the exact counterpart of Chamberlain in his approach to the war. He, however, entirely lacked the latter's moral fibre and political integrity. Not only did he not command the loyal support of the French Parliament but his own ministry was a house divided against itself. Soon after the declaration of war, he was compelled to take M. Reynaud as Minister of Finance in his Cabinet but the latter's straight programme of work and sacrifice never appealed to him. It is shocking to note that neither food nor even petrol was rationed in France until six months after the war began.

M. Reynaud became the Premier on March 20—on sufferance of his enemies. Two days later the Chamber of Deputies gave him a vote of confidence with a majority of 212, there being exactly 211 abstentions! The new Premier worked like a Trojan to retrieve the military, political and moral position of *la patrie* in spite of the regiment of traitors working behind his back. France, however, had gone too deep into the whirlpool to be extricated by any eleventh hour efforts, however heroic.

The Chamberlain Government seems to have been blissfully ignorant of all the national rot and canker furiously at work beyond the Channel. The Maginot Line mentality had possessed them, too, in its deadly grip. "The short and sufficient answer," said the Prime Minister in the Commons on February 8, "to every endeavour of the enemy to sow dissension between us is the phrase which I have heard so often on the lips of my French colleagues—*Nous sommes d'accord.*"

*Nous sommes d'accord!* It sounds like an epitaph today!

Why should Hitler on his part have waited eight long months to launch his own offensive on the West-

ern Front? To say that this was a deliberate plan to demoralise his enemies before striking them down is to give him more credit for strategic genius than is justified by an objective study of facts. It is true that he had to overhaul his war machine after the Polish campaign. The weather conditions, too, after the first two months were hardly favourable for a full-scale offensive. But this does not explain everything.

It may even be asked whether Hitler was prepared for the declaration of war by Britain and France. He no doubt wanted war—but only with Poland. His Foreign Minister, the ex-champagne seller Ribbentrop, was assuring him till the very end that the democracies would never stand up and fight. There are good reasons to believe that Hitler was really sincere—as much at least as a Hitler could be sincere!—in the peace proposals he outlined in his speech to the Reichstag on October 6, 1939. True, the conference of powers he wanted was mainly to set the international seal on his Polish conquests; but he seems to have entertained a sneaking hope that the Allied enemies could even then be bamboozled into laying down arms. His references to them were studiously polite: “I have always expressed to France the wish to bury once and for all the old enmity and allow those nations to find their way to one another .... No less have been my efforts for German-British understanding and even German-British friendship. I have always felt it to be one of the aims of my life to bring those two nations together.”

Even after the unceremonious rejection of this peace offensive, Hitler did not proceed immediately to his war offensive. Surprising as it may appear, Germany was most active only where she was most weak—on the high seas. The *Athenia* was torpedoed the very day war was declared. H.M.S. *Courageous* was sunk by a U-boat on the 18th September, while

on October 18 came that "remarkable exploit of considerable skill and daring" when H.M.S. *The Royal Oak* was sunk while at anchor in Scapa Flow. The long-threatened "secret weapon" was soon put into service, though Britain quickly mastered the menace of the magnetic mine. The scuttling of the *Graf Spee* off Montevideo on December 17 revealed once again Britain's naval supremacy.

German troops were massed along the frontiers of Holland and Belgium as early as the middle of October. At the end of the month an invasion of the Low Countries appeared imminent and a state of siege was declared by the Dutch Government. There were again strong rumours of an immediate showdown on the 14th of January. Military leave was cancelled not only in Belgium and Holland but also in the B.E.F. On this occasion the order to attack is said to have been countermanded at the eleventh hour. Hitler seems to have still entertained considerable respect for the might of the Allies and it is significant that his first cautious moves on the western war-board were against two puny neutrals. More than the excellent results gained, it was the astounding revelations of the utter unpreparedness of his enemies that finally prevailed upon him to give the long-awaited word. The German war machine crashed with a deafening roar into Luxemburg, Belgium and Holland in the early hours of Sunday, April 9, 1940.

The Blitzkrieg had begun.

August 23, 1941

We did not want to discuss with England and France such obsolete terms as international justice, humanity and such like. These things simply nauseate us....We have done with them long ago.

—Dr. Josef Goebbels

# I

## BLITZKRIEG BEGINS

*Hitler missed the bus.*

—Neville Chamberlain.

April 12, 1940

W HATEVER may be the outcome of Hitler's subjugation of Denmark and the invasion of Norway, it will go down in history as a spectacular coup. Hitler has lived to his reputation as an irresistible conqueror and the hawk-like manner in which his hordes swooped upon two defenceless neutrals and brazenfacedly proclaimed them to be "under German protection" verily took away our breath.

"The dreaded, long-awaited Blitzkrieg has begun at last," was the comment heard on all hands. Everybody was heartily tired of the stalemate that had descended upon the war ever since Poland was overrun by the German army in the first week of September last. Since then the belligerents have simply dug themselves in and it has been practically "All quiet on the Western Front." It was a war without a fight. Rumours of a German spring offensive have been rife for a pretty long time now. Though it suited the strategy of the Allies merely to sit tight and wait, such "sitzkrieg" tactics were wearing out the slender resources of the Reich. While the mighty war machine had to be fed, the German people had to deny themselves one necessity after another. The last winter imposed severe privations and every passing day the Allied blockade was becoming more and more effective. Well-informed neutral observers reported that at the end of the first six months of the present war, the

plight of Germany was apparently as perilous as at the end of the third year in the last.

But above all those material considerations loomed the psychological one of the great Fuehrer's prestige. That prestige has been fostered on the series of victories—bloodless at first, sanguinary afterwards—which stand to the credit of Hitler. The Fuehrer was a demi-god; he was invincible; he would make the Deutschland the centre of a new World Empire.

And here was Hitler cooling his heels all those months, taxing the patience and wearing the strength of an already impoverished German nation. Where were all the promised victories, the subjugation of a decadent France and an emasculated Britain? The myth of the Nordic super-man was growing thin as the belts were being tightened up inch by inch. Even a regimented and controlled people like the Germans must begin to question and think for themselves as hunger began to gnaw their vitals. Only the dope of more victories would save them from a rapid disillusion.

This psychological factor more than the British sowing of mines around the shores of Norway was responsible for the Blitzkrieg. Naturally, there must have been protracted cogitations as to where the next blow was to be delivered. To hurl even the matchless German army against the Maginot Line would have been sheer suicide. The Balkan States, which are trembling in their shoes for months now, have been long marked out as victims but then appeasement of their old Axis ally and the apprehension about their new partner must have made the Nazis stay their hands for the time being. An attack either on Belgium or Holland would have immediately involved the Reich in long-drawn engagement with the Allies, who are ready to rush to the help of those two countries whose security is vital to their own safety.

Denmark and Norway were thus considered as the easiest of the potential preys and there is now no

doubt whatever that their invasion was not merely envisaged but actively begun long before the British began to sow their mines last Monday morning. Besides, the bacon, butter and eggs of Denmark would help to stock the empty German larder and the occupation of Norway would nullify the British blockade and maintain the inflow of iron ore from Sweden.

Much amazement and even admiration has been expressed in many quarters over the clockwork manner in which Denmark was occupied in a night and the capital and most other ports of Norway captured by Nazi detachments. One can as well wonder over the swift and sure manner in which the serpent swallows a frog! Opposition to the Nazis would have been sheer suicide for the Danes and while it is obvious that the Norwegians were caught napping, the German success was essentially due to the Trojan Horse tactics employed by the Nazis.

Active preparations for landing troops and supplies were already afoot and it was only a dramatic coincidence that the fruits of those plans were reaped by the Germans just as the Allies had sowed their mines.

It must be admitted that the secret was extremely well-kept and that the Allies seem to have had no inkling whatever of those developments, which hardly reflects any credit upon their Secret Service, even if their strategists had vaguely foreseen such a happening. But if surprise, which, as Napoleon said, constitutes half of success, was in favour of the Germans, it speaks volumes for the British grit and strength that they did not reel even a moment under the shock. They were hot on the trail of the German detachments ere the latter had dug themselves in and the British Navy is to-day not only mistress of the seas but also of Norway's long coast-line.

King Haakon of Norway and his Government have refused to submit to the Nazi yoke, which must have been a rude shock for the Nazis. Their failure

to daze the victim by the first hammer-blow exposes them to a number of dangers, which they must have hardly foreseen. Norway is a mountainous country, with very poor means of communications. The mechanized units of Hitler cannot overrun that country as they did Poland. Landing of troops via the sea is next to impossible now and the air arm while it may bomb and murder defenceless people cannot keep the Swastika flying on an alien soil for long.

The Blitzkrieg has not only miscarried as far as Norway is concerned, but it has back-fired. In fact it is fast proving a boomerang. While Hitler's personal stock may have momentarily gone up among his hypnotised people and while the Co-operatives of Denmark may help to keep the German hausfrau's fires burning a little longer, the debit side, which is already heavy, is bound to grow in volume day by day.

In the first place, Hitler's pocket navy is seriously crippled. The loss of one battleship, at least five cruisers and a number of destroyers, transport ships and merchant vessels, totalling a tonnage of 60,000 at a conservative estimate means that Germany will have to confine her naval operations to the Baltic. Secondly, the maintenance of the hold of Norway will serve only as a bleeding process, even if troops and munitions are carried overland from the extreme south. The Nazis cannot certainly retire from their costly venture now: if they do, their prestige—which is the foundation of their power—will be gone. They cannot exploit Norway, which will serve only as a growing liability to them.

They are, in effect, in for a war on two fronts, which German Generals down from the great Hindenburg have always dreaded. The Allies, on the other hand, have been always anxious and even actively manoeuvring for the extension of operations to as many fronts as possible. Churchill had good reasons to expatiate in his brilliant speech in the Commons

upon "the grave and strategic error committed by Hitler."

*April 19, 1940*

To all appearance the war is gradually moving into its "Total" phase. Though during the last week the hostilities in Norway naturally occupied the centre of the stage, public attention was also attracted by the alarms and excursions in a number of other countries. By a supreme paradox the most quiet spot on earth to-day seems to be the Western Front, where the flower of the youth of three nations stands face to face, grimly waiting for the Zero Hour to strike!

Operations in Norway are at present in a fluid and indefinable stage. While there is no doubt whatever that the Nazis have suffered a severe set-back in Scandinavia—the essence of Blitzkrieg being to strike down the enemy by sheer terror—it is futile to hope that the German army will be compelled to retire precipitately from Norway in the near future.

The Nazis have not been able to black-out Norway from the map of Europe as they succeeded in doing in the case of Denmark. But their forces have penetrated deep into the heart of that unfortunate country. They have routed the Norwegian army and the capture of Oslo and all the other principal ports, with their aerodromes and arsenals, radio stations and railway lines, has invested them with immense strategical advantages. They are pressing heavily upon the gallant remnants of the Norwegian army, who, taken completely by surprise, have been driven away from their bases and are conducting a guerilla warfare in the hilly terrain. With the events in Poland fresh in our minds, we cannot be too optimistic about the resistance of Norway's army—if the straggling troops can be called as such.

The task of ousting the Germans from Norwegian soil thus obviously devolves upon the Allies. So far the latter have certainly rendered an excellent account of themselves. Narvik (from which Swedish iron ore was being shipped to Germany) and the Lofoten Islands have been captured by the British Navy and a severe blow has been struck at the Achilles' heel of Germany. British Expeditionary Forces have been landed on various points of the northern Norwegian coast and though their numbers are a closely guarded secret, they are well-equipped and well-trained for the job in hand.

After crippling the German navy in the first week of the Norwegian conflict, the British Navy successfully accomplished the audacious feat of mining the area from the Skager Rak to Memel, which will seriously imperil German communications with Norway and will exact a heavy toll from the remnant of the German fleet.

Just at present the R. A. F. seems to have taken charge of the operations in Norway. Successive relays of British bombers have been attacking for the last few days the aerial bases at Stavanger and Trondheim, Kristiansand and even Oslo. The aim is to destroy aircraft, aerodromes and petrol dumps and thus to make the task of the German aerial armada in carrying supplies to the invading army as dangerous as possible. It is difficult to assess the success that has attended this offensive so far and it is obvious that those hazardous operations will entail a heavy toll of British machines and men. The Allied strategists, however, consider the capture of Stavanger of the greatest importance, as it will give them a powerful foothold on the southern coast of Norway.

To sum up the present situation in Norway, it may be said that while Germany successfully holds the lower half of Norway, its victory has proved to be Pyrrhic. All the expected profits have evaporated into smoke, while the unexpected losses are bound to

increase and prove paralysing as the Allies' offensive gains momentum. This does not mean that the Nazis will lightly let go their hold upon the victim; they have already concentrated nearly 75,000 of their troops in Norway and the fortunes of war will have to take a decisive turn before they are finally dislodged.

There are unmistakable indications, however, that the operations in Norway will soon recede into the back-ground and that the hostilities will extend to new theatres. A large number of German battalions are reported to be massed on the borders of Luxemburg obviously in anticipation of the invasion of Belgium as well as of Holland. The latter country had the mortification of provoking a controversy over the division of its corpse even before its demise but it has adroitly turned the tables by suggesting that the Dutch East Indies can constitute an independent and autonomous nation by itself, even though the mother country may be overrun by the enemy.

April 26, 1940

Last week the situation in Norway appeared to be indefinable. As one tries to piece together the jig-saw puzzle of conflicting reports coming from various centres, belligerent and neutral, since then, the state of affairs becomes incomprehensible.

British war communiques continue to be laconic when they are not altogether reticent regarding the latest developments in Norway and, for the matter of that, in any other theatre of war. This is, of course, in pursuance of a well-settled policy adopted and followed since the very beginning of hostilities of not releasing any information unless it is duly confirmed and authenticated. While this certainly invests the

reports broadcast by the British Ministry of Information with the hall-mark of veracity, their news value is entirely lost in the sifting process.

The German High Command communiquees as also the Radio Broadcasts of Goebbels and Lord Haw Haw no doubt are always quickly off the mark. Unquestionably, their claims have as a rule proved to be false when they are not altogether fantastic and no reliance can be thus placed upon the stories of German advance in various sectors regularly relayed by them. The correspondents of Swedish newspapers, on the other hand, seem to be merely indulging in much wishful thinking. Their reports are always too highly coloured and sensational to be true, as was revealed again and again during the course of the Russo-Finnish war.

All this makes the task of the commentator and of the amateur strategist extraordinarily difficult. From day to day conflicting reports pour over the creed machines; sometimes the evening's cables flatly contradict the morning's. To give only one glaring example, it was jubilantly flashed almost a fortnight ago that Narvik, which is the focal point of the present conflict, was captured by the British Expeditionary Force. It was great news, indeed, until the soft pedal was put upon our pens by the latter report that the German garrison there was virtually trapped! Then we were told that Narvik is a mass of ruins owing to the fierce British naval bombardment. This was soon contradicted by an eye-witness in the columns of the Swedish *Aftonbladet*, who noted that British warships were displaying every consideration and that not a single civilian was killed. Still later, the German News Agency claimed that fresh supplies and reinforcements were being carried to German troops there!

It is clear, however, that after the initial thrilling encounters between the British Navy and the German invaders, in which the latter undoubtedly received the worse knock, the tempo of Allied penetration of Nor-

way is perceptibly (and perhaps purposely) slackened. It is true that the British Expeditionary Force has landed in Norway at a number of points but those who hoped that its very appearance was sufficient to dislodge the Germans from Norwegian soil are likely to be disappointed. The Germans hold all the strategic positions—ports, railway-heads, broadcasting stations, arsenals etc.—in Southern Norway. Their coup was brilliantly planned and meticulously executed. From the very first moment of operations they hold everywhere the whiphand, while the Norwegian Government and army are forced to turn fugitives in their own land.

There is a pithy maxim in jurisprudence that “Possession is nine points of law.” Its truth is equally applicable to war. Modern strategists consider that the proportion of attacking to defending troops must be at least three to one. This ratio may be reduced considering that the Germans are on an alien soil and holding down an unwilling people. But they are receiving supplies and reinforcements regularly and in great numbers in spite of British bombing and they are gradually but surely consolidating their positions as far as the southern half of Norway is concerned. The straggling Norwegian troops are no match for the Nazi legions and howsoever gallantly they may stand their ground, unaided their lot is hopeless.

The Allies, on the other hand, have to proceed with great caution. Though in the North their progress is so far thoroughly satisfactory, in the South they have to contest every inch of ground from an entrenched enemy. The support that the Norwegians can give them does not amount to much; in fact it was reported that the Norwegians have to be doled out even arms and ammunitions from the British stores. And even though we may not be hearing much of German aerial bombardment, it goes without saying that it is not proving a cake-walk for the B.E.F. German bombers have their bases much nearer and they are

never known to possess any scruples about the objectives to be hit. In fact they are systematically trying to demoralise the hapless Norwegians by bombing open villages and towns.

For a good many weeks to come, therefore, one must be prepared to see a sort of stalemate in Norway. There might be minor successes and reverses for both the combatants but essentially it is going to be a war of attrition. What really matters is the fact that as long as the war lasts, Norway will remain on the debit side of Germany. That itself is a paralysing defeat for Germany: instead of replenishing her armament factories with the rich iron ore from Narvik, she will have to pour men, money and munitions into the Fjords of Norway. How long can she stand this drain of her life-blood?

*May 3, 1940*

"You have accomplished the mighty task which I had to impose upon you. I am proud of you." With these grandiloquent words Hitler greeted the German army operating in Norway in his "Order of the Day" of May 1.

"Certain operations are in progress and we must do nothing, which might jeopardise the lives of those engaged in them." This was the plea put forth by Premier Chamberlain, in his speech before the House of Commons on May 2, for not removing the veil of secrecy which has enveloped the Allied engagements in Norway for the last three weeks.

These two statements of the chiefs of the belligerent nations are obviously complementary to each other and they hardly need any further comment. For once the Fuhrer's boast seems justified even though it might be too early to say that his Army's task is accomplished completely and finally. But Hitler has

good reasons to halloo, even though technically he may not yet be out of the woods.

How came it to pass that the tables were turned so suddenly against the Allied forces? Everybody knew, of course, that the Germans had got their foot in first and that it would be no easy task to dislodge them. But the British had begun so well—even so brilliantly.

They had sunk almost a third of the German navy. They had destroyed scores of German bombers. They had made the Norwegian aerodromes unusable. At the very first hammer-stroke they had captured Narvik. Allied troops were isolating the German detachments of occupation in Trondheim, Bergen and a number of other strategic points. The British Expeditionary Forces were landing all along the western coast of Norway. And it was only a question of days before the Germans were hurled into the Skager Rak!—Or so we were led to believe!

Disillusionment was long in dawning upon us. At first we attributed the absence of news only to the ultra cautious attitude of the British Ministry of Information. We expected the full story of the success of Allied operations to be released any moment. But when day after day the cables began to repeat the same tale, it became evident that there was a hitch somewhere.

Mr. Chamberlain talked about the withdrawal of the whole of the Allied forces from Andalsnes (since captured by the Germans) "under the very noses of German aeroplanes, without losing a single man in the operations." Reuter reports that this part of the speech was cheered by the Commons! Perhaps that is about the only negative satisfaction we can derive from those dismal revelations.

The reactions of this "successful" retreat are not merely confined to the strategic operations in Norway. They cover also the political and moral plane. Regarding the first, it may be said that the whole of southern

Norway is now entirely in the hands of Germans, who can consolidate their power and positions. From Oslo in the extreme south to Trondheim in the centre the country is garrisoned by German detachments and while it seems from the Premier's speech that in certain sectors the Allies are yet operating, the prospects do not appear to be promising. The coastline presumably is yet open to the British Navy but the long and narrow fjords, with which Norway is dotted, make naval operations against an entrenched enemy extremely risky. But above all, what is going to be the effect of all this on the Norwegian people? They are honeycombed by traitors; their morale, inspite of the heroism of King Haakon and his Government, was never strong; and their opposition to the mighty invaders has been puny. What if, faced with this initial set-back to their would-be liberators, demoralisation sets in? Its process, when it once starts, is like an avalanche, as was so tragically seen in Poland. One wonders if Mr. Chamberlain visualised this aspect of the situation at all!

Then there are the Neutrals. They have seen Poland raped and razed in spite of the British guarantee. They have seen Finland coldbloodedly let down by its "realist" Scandinavian sister-nations. Now it is the turn of Norway. There the Allies are not only in a position to implement their word but they have been actively preparing for the contingency for weeks now. On Mr. Chamberlain's own admission in the Commons, Norway thus represents almost the last bastion of the hope of the neutral nations of Europe. As Sir Archibald Sinclair picturesquely put it in a speech at Edinburgh, unless the British Government decided on vigorous and determined action in Norway, the neutrals would rush to climb on the German "band-waggon."

Mr. Chamberlain's self-complacency seems to have blinded him to all those considerations or at any rate there is no trace of their awareness in his speech in the Commons. Neither did he seem to comprehend

the moral and material gain to the Nazis inherent in the British withdrawal from Southern Norway not merely *vis-a-vis* non-belligerents like Italy and neutrals like the Balkans but also in Germany itself.

Even if we are prompted to suspend our judgment till Tuesday in deference to the British Premier's behest, there seems to be little ground to expect a sudden reversal of fortune in favour of the Allies in the next two days. Possibly (one hopes at least!) they will capture Narvik and send a few more bombing expeditions to Stavanger and Oslo. But every day adds to the stranglehold of Germans on southern (which means three-fourths) Norway and makes the task of driving them out more difficult.

But having said so much, and after having dwelt so long on the disastrous consequences that are bound to follow the present Allied reverse, one may agree with Mr. Chamberlain that "It is far too soon to strike the Norwegian balance-sheet yet, for the campaign has merely concluded a single phase." For, paradoxical as it may seem to say so, the gains to the Nazis out of their present adventure are essentially negative, while their losses are very much positive. No doubt, potentially, Norway is like a pistol aimed at the heart of Britain. But a long process of consolidation of the country will have to pass before Norway becomes a leaping board for the German aerial armada attacking Britain.

What will be the effect of this severe set-back on the Norwegian front on Mr. Chamberlain's Home Front? In other words will Mr. Chamberlain have to make way for a less complacent and cocksure if not a more energetic and democratic successor? The time gained till Tuesday will be helpful to the British Government not only in trying to retrieve the reverse in Norway but also in trying to retrieve its prestige in Parliament. So long Mr. Chamberlain has succeeded in ruling the Tory roost with a heavy hand but the

ranks of the critics are bound to grow in numbers and vociferousness now.

*May 10, 1940*

Eight months and one week after the declaration of hostilities the real war has begun. Inferno has been let loose over Europe and the life of tens of thousands of innocent people is hanging by a thread. Humanity stands at the cross-roads of history to-day.

If hope deferred maketh the heart sick, danger postponed makes our souls complacent. On that historic 3rd of September 1939, we awaited with bated breath the news of the bombing of London and Paris and Berlin. We were prepared for the worst. We were long being warned that it was going to be a totalitarian Armageddon, that no quarter would be asked or given and that non-combatants as well as combatants, women and children as well as men will be drawn in the bloody maw of Mars.

The lights went out in Europe as well as in distant India. The march of feet was heard in all the five continents of the world. The Allied and Reich troops took their positions on their respective fortifications. In the east of Europe Poland had fallen a prey to the Nazi Blitzkrieg. But still our eyes were rivetted on the Western Front, which we knew was going to be the real theatre of war. Days flew by and weeks passed and yet there was nothing to report from the Western Front. The opposing troops had simply dug themselves in. "All quiet on the Western Front" became a joke.

The lack of hostilities soon developed into a stalemate. We were told that it was going to be a war of stomachs, of attrition. Germany was to be economically blockaded and thus defeated by the backdoor as it were. The U-boat and the magnetic mine menace

was being gradually controlled. The Plate River naval fight bucked up the Allies. The stranglehold was alleged to be becoming tighter and tighter around the Nazi neck and when Hitler swooped over Denmark and Norway in April he was half pitied by his enemies for having "missed the bus" and for having made a grievous tactical blunder. Mr. Chamberlain bragged of feeling ten times stronger than he did at the beginning of war.

The bubble of this fatal self-complacency and wishful thinking has been blown sky-high during the last few weeks. Far from having "missed his bus" Hitler had the Allies quickly on the run in Norway. To-day he is the unquestioned master of Poland and Denmark and Norway not to talk of Austria and Czechoslovakia. The economic blockade has proved an Allied eyewash when all Europe is cowering under the shadow of the Swastika.

The debate in the British Parliament last week was a bitter lesson in disillusionment for the British people, their Allies in Europe and sympathisers throughout the world. The very man who bragged of his tenfold strength made a miserable show in explaining one failure after another. His Ministers had to confess a number of shortcomings in the fighting machine. The world stood aghast on hearing from the lips of Sir Samuel Hoare, the Air Minister, that even after eight months of intensive preparations and with the resources of the whole world to fall back upon, the combined Allies had not yet reached air parity with Germany! And the cup of humiliation was filled to the brim when Mr. Churchill himself spoke of the British forces, who were sent with such a flourish of trumpets to Norway, being out-numbered, out-paced and out-manoeuvred. It was a long, dismal tale of defeat.

The only relieving feature of last week's parliamentary debate was that it provided a magnificent demonstration of democracy in practice, as an Ame-

rican paper put it. It really did hearten the lovers of democracy all the world over to find the Mother of Parliaments sitting in open judgment over the failure of its own government, while the enemy was knocking at the door, as it were.

Chamberlain's fate was sealed even before the House had divided. That he was himself conscious of the impending doom was evident from his desperate appeal to his "friends" to join him in the lobby. Most of those gentlemen resented this call upon their personal loyalties in the hour of national jeopardy and either remained neutral or openly voted against him. Speculations about the future course the Premier would adopt were hardly begun when they were abruptly ended by the news of Hitler's invasion of the Low Countries in the early hours of Friday morning. Mr. Churchill was the obvious nominee for the post; the nation could not be without a leader in her hour of direst peril and Mr. Chamberlain made his none too early exit from 10, Downing Street on Friday night.

Hitler's audacious attack on Holland and Belgium has suddenly changed the whole complexion of war. This invasion is no doubt in the best style of the Fuehrer but unfortunately for him his trump card—the element of surprise—is long since lost for him. Those two countries had feverishly made as complete preparations for their protection as was possible for their slender resources but at best they can delay the march of Hitler's hordes. The task of defeating them will naturally fall upon the Allies, who one hopes, were not caught napping as in Denmark and Norway.

Two things must be stressed here. The first is that Hitler is out to risk everything on this last throw. No sacrifice is too great for him and no atrocity beneath him. In his message to the German soldiers on the Western Front, he observed that the hour had come for the most decisive struggle of the German people. It is a gigantic gamble in which he has

staked the future of himself, of his Party and of his people. If he wins, he will be the master of Europe and the Nazi Empire will soon spread from the Baltic to the Pacific. If he loses,—well, *Apres moi, le deluge!*

But, deliberately, he has come out of the shelter of the Siegfried Line to launch the present offensive. The essence of Blitzkrieg is that it must sweep all opposition before it at the very first blow. If it fails, it becomes a boomerang. And failure to occupy Holland and Belgium will mean an invitation to the Allied armies to sweep into the Reich through her western and not so well defended boundaries. Hitler has already begun to bomb open towns in Holland and Belgium and France. So far there is at least a vestige of discrimination in selecting his targets. But if he is baulked of his prey, he will let Hell loose over Europe and the Allies will be bound to retaliate in the same kind, as they have already made it clear.

The second factor to be stressed is that her enemy is now at the door-step of Britain with a gun in his hand. Never in her chequered history, not even in the days of the Great Armada, had arisen such a grave peril to the very national existence of Britain. It has been a sort of eternal verity in her foreign policy to see that the Netherlands are not in the hands of or even under the influence of a potential enemy. The security of the Low Countries has axiomatically been held as an extension of Britain's own security. Napoleon rightly described Antwerp as "a pistol aimed at the heart of England." In fighting for Holland and Belgium, the Allies and particularly Britain will be fighting for their very life.

So long there has been too facile an assumption of the superiority of the naval over the aerial might. Happenings in Norway have already compelled British strategists to revise their opinions and it is apparent that Hitler is mainly relying upon his aerial armada to assault the Low Countries. We have been hearing

too much of the petrol shortage in Germany and too little of the immense, supremely efficacious and utterly unscrupulous machine which Goering has perfected in the last five years. It looks as if the present war will be decisively fought only in and through the air and one only hopes that the position of the Allies' air arm is not as bad as the world was led to believe in the Parliamentary debate last week.

*May 17, 1940*

A great hurricane is sweeping over the triangle formed by the fortress of Liege near the Belgo-German border on the east, by Antwerp on the Belgo-Dutch frontier in the north and Longwy on the French-Luxemburg border in the south. This may well prove the battle-field of destiny, the terrain where the most decisive engagements of the present world war will probably be fought.

In a sense this area has selected itself. The German-French frontier proper has been strategically neutralised by the parallel walls of steel and concrete which stretch over the whole length of the Frontier. The French built their Maginot Line with the deliberate intention of sitting tight—and even pretty—over it. Hitler is surely not a fool to hurl his armies against those impregnable walls. The stalemate which had settled itself on the Western Front for the last eight months was really serving as a process of slow strangulation for the Third Reich. So when the Nazis decided to strike, they had to invade Belgium and Luxemburg. The novel feature of Hitler's latest Blitzkrieg lay in his savage attack on Holland, which even Kaiser Wilhelm II had spared in the last war. The German strategists have always considered that to be a mistake and so the Fuehrer decided to take no chance this time. The Dutch had a pathetic faith in their loyal neutrality. For almost a century they

have been living at peace with their neighbours. Long before the Blitzkrieg descended upon them, they were overrun by the Nazi "Fifth Column".

The real surprise of the last week was thus not that the Dutch army capitulated on the fifth day of war, but that it made a brave show even that long. Hitler probably expected the nation to surrender without firing a shot, as did Denmark. For five days he had to hurl the whole force of his war machine on that ill-prepared and poorly-equipped army. By ruthless bombing of civilians as well as combatants, of open towns as also of military targets, he no doubt brought them to their knees in five days, but at an immense cost indeed to his aerial armada. "General Dyke", about which we have been hearing so long, proved about as helpful to the Dutch as did "General Mud" to Poland. Faced with the threat of total extinction, the Dutch Commander-in-Chief had no alternative but to lay down arms.

The Fuehrer has certainly added one more scalp to his Totalitarian Trophies. But with a big difference. The Dutch surrender is not on the lines of that of Hitler's other victims; for, while the Dutch army has capitulated, the Dutch nation remains very much at war with the Reich. In Holland itself, the eastern area of Zealand is yet the scene of much sanguinary fighting. The Dutch navy and merchant fleet is safe and in the service of the Allies. And paradoxical as it may appear, the greatness of Holland lay not in itself but in her Empire. The immense resources of that Empire will now be freely available to the Allies.

It is necessary to bear all this in mind while assessing the balance-sheet of the fall of Holland. That it means a severe set-back to the Allied cause and an inestimable gain to the Nazis goes without saying. Much amazement has been expressed over the fact that the Allies could render the Dutch no effective aid. In retrospect it seems as if the Allied

General Staff deliberately cut off Holland as a dead loss. With the first rush the German armies had already penetrated deep into the vitals of the country and captured the most important strategic positions with the help of Nazi spies and sympathisers, whose name was legion. The R.A.F. did whatever damage it could by bombing German-occupied aerodromes and by machine-gunning moving columns of German mechanized units. But sending whole detachments of armies would have proved an extremely hazardous—and even foolhardy—business.

The lesson of the recent withdrawal in Norway was evidently not lost upon the Allies. While the Germans hold the preponderating balance of power in the air, it would have been suicidal to land a mass of troops on the Dutch coast. That was the only way of lending aid to the Dutch and that the Allies could not avail themselves of it is an unmistakable pointer to the supremacy of the German air armada over the British Navy. Moreover the risk would have been hardly worth the gains. The densely-populated, water-logged terrain of Holland is not suitable for the rapid deployment and movement of modern mechanized troops and after all, the vantage points were already in the hands of the enemy. However galling to Allied prestige it might have appeared to leave the new ally in lurch, nothing else was possible in the circumstances.

While the Nazi onslaught was taking place all along the frontiers of three neutral powers.—and the irresistible nature of the thrust can be seen, first, by the swift subjugation of Holland and Luxemburg and second, by the hundred-mile deep penetration of Belgium in barely two days, in spite of the chain of Belgian fortresses all along the Belgo-German border—the Allied armies were taking their positions according to plan. The happenings of last week had been long foreseen and even though the Belgian Government with a fatalistic obduracy had so long refused to hold staff-talks with the Allies, General Gamelin can

be presumed to have had a tentative plan of action ready for eventualities.

Summing up the situation in Belgium we find that after a week of Nazi Blitzkrieg, two-thirds of Belgium is quite intact. In the remaining one-third occupied by Germany, there are isolated fortresses like Liege which are still engaging the enemy. The most serious feature for the Allies is the alleged piercing of the Maginot Line at Sedan. The Germans roundly claim that German tank detachments have breached the line and have spread fanwise east and west. Both Paris and London deny this report and the situation seems extremely obscure. Even if there were the least truth in this news, it is a danger-signal indeed. For it would mean that the war had spread to the French soil and a flank-movement of German forces would not only serve as a trap for the Allied forces in Belgium but would imperil the security of France itself. The very fact, however, that twenty-four hours after the first report appeared, the situation is not considered as very critical is a good augury. Hitler may be trusted to lose no time in storming the breach and hurling the maximum number of his armies through it. Sedan has stirring memories for the Reich. For here it was that the Prussian Army inflicted a crippling defeat upon France in 1870. Will history repeat itself?

That is the question that is on everybody's lips today. Will the Nazi Juggernaut sweep on in its relentless march and take France and later Britain in its stride or has a halt been cried to its mad career? The answer is that it is an open question and will remain so for at least a month more. Hitler is the master of a war machine as powerful as it is unscrupulous. To-day it is at the peak of its power and striking force while the Allies are lamentably lagging behind. The French Army, like the British Navy, is reputedly second to none. But to-day he who controls the air is master of all he surveys. The R.A.F. and the French air force are no doubt gallantly doing their level best

but they have considerable leeway to make before they can catch up with Goering's boys.

The march of German mechanised forces is being covered and sustained by the wings of Nazi aeroplanes. Nobody knows for certain how many of the latter there are. But that so well informed a person as President Roosevelt should note in his address to the American Congress that "one belligerent has many more planes than all its opponents combined and also appears to have a weekly productive capacity, at the moment, far greater than its opponents" has indeed an ominous ring about it for the Allies. This woeful paucity of planes threatens to have fearful consequences for the Allies unless and until they catch up with the German production rate.

## II

# FALL OF FRANCE

*O Liberty! Can man resign thee,  
Once having felt thy gen'rous flame?  
Can dungeons, bolts and bars confine thee,  
Or whips thy noble spirit tame?*

—*La Marseillaise*

*May 24, 1940*

T would be foolish to minimise the gravity of the situation on the Western Front. But it would be worse than foolish to exaggerate it either. No doubt the Nazi war chariot has so far progressed, unhindered and unhampered, at a pace which has fairly taken away the breath of the world. Even with one's knowledge of the happenings in Poland, Norway and Holland, one was not prepared for the events of the last week. One could never have imagined that within a week of the initial thrust in the French fortifications at Sedan in the North-east, the Nazi motorised columns would reach Boulogne in the West in one triumphal march!

The unexpected, the unimaginable, has however come to pass and the whole of Northern France is to-day, more or less, under the Nazi heel. They have annihilated the Ninth Army of France, taken its commander—the one-armed general Giraud—prisoner, and pushed their mechanised columns right to the sea. Strategically no doubt it is a momentous feat; Hitler's Nazis have achieved within a week what the Kaiser's armies failed to do in four years. Arras and Amiens, which have historic association since the last war and which marked the turning tide of von Kluck's army in 1914-18, have fallen at the very first onslaught. Abbeville and Boulogne, too, were captured and the

Nazis now stand on the Channel ports casting their eyes towards the distant cliffs of Dover.

Mark, however, the qualification "more or less." No doubt northern France is echoing the tramp of the German troops, more ominously than it did a quarter of a century ago. But it does not mean that the whole area is occupied, much less consolidated, by them. They appear to have just pierced through the French territory in a hectic rush to the sea. They have obviously developed new tactics of warfare, in keeping with their new mechanical and aeronautical arms. They don't stop to fortify their new positions, leaving perhaps to their Fifth Columns and to the natural confusion and alarm among the civilian population to keep their lines of communications open. That this new strategy has created consternation and caught the Allied High Command napping goes without saying. No less a person than the Premier of France has confessed it in as many words.

But provided the French armies keep their own mobility and morale intact, they are yet in a position to catch the invading hordes in a pincer movement. It is all a gigantic military melee from Montmedy in the north-east to Boulogne in the west and S. Quentin in the south to Ghent in the north. A large part of the British Expeditionary Force is quite intact and valiantly fighting in Belgium in a line west of the river Scheldt. South of them and in northern France there are large sections of French troops which had pushed into Belgium two weeks ago. They have neither surrendered nor are they annihilated as yet. On the other hand they are furiously fighting at a number of strategic centres, the battle around Cambrai being as protracted as it has proved sanguinary.

Owing to the paucity—even the lack—of news it is not possible to assess the prospects of fight in this sector. I have observed above that the German invaders can be caught in a pincer movement. But for

that the B. E. F. and the French forces in the north must have a clear avenue of access to the main body of Allied army in the south. Otherwise it is quite evident that now that Boulogne has gone, the B.E.F. and its French comrades in Belgium and northern France are in a deadly peril of being themselves trapped on all three sides. Everything now depends on the Allied counter-offensive, which though not started yet, is said to be imminent. General Maxime Weygand—the new Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies—has completed his personal investigation of the battle fronts. But it must be remembered that the Front now spreads over nearly 200 miles and it is not easy to rally the forces which are interspersed throughout this area and many of which are entirely cut off. The German motorised columns which march at lightning speed do not do so to capture a new position but mainly to cut all communications and to create the maximum confusion.

It will be remembered that though the situation is relatively far graver today, thanks to the German bombers, in the last war too, the Germans had a free run of northern France until the Allied counter-offensive, brilliantly conceived by Marshal Foch and stubbornly pressed by his lieutenants, not only checked the rush but definitely turned the tide. The new generation of German soldiers has proved itself superior to its immediate predecessor but one hopes that the French *poilu* will at least maintain the traditions of his forbears: *THEY SHALL NOT PASS.....*

One cannot but be impressed—even wonderstruck—by the spectacular German advance from Bouillon to Boulogne within a week. It will remain an everlasting memorial to German efficiency, speed and reckless courage. It was a perfect “Blitzkrieg.” But having said so much, we must look to the other side of the medal also. We must count the cost. The unofficial Allied estimate of half a million German

casualties may be dismissed as an exaggeration. That the Nazis have used not only their material but also men in a prodigal manner in the race to the sea seems pretty clear. The parachutists are rightly nicknamed "suicide squads" and thousands of them have been massacred in Norway, Holland and Belgium—and now in France. The invading troops are mostly mechanised. Even a medium tank consumes petrol at the rate of a gallon a mile and the German tanks are said to be dreadnoughts on wheels. Then the supporting aircraft-flotillas are gluttons for high-grade oil. If all we have been hearing and reading about the serious shortage of petrol in Germany has not been so much eye-wash, then the present incursion in France must have heavily diminished the stocks of German petrol. Add to that the fact that the R.A.F. claim to have set ablaze a number of storage tanks in Bremen and elsewhere and one can realise how serious the petrol prospects must be for Hitler.

It is thus very evident that Hitler cannot go on pouring blood and oil in this reckless fashion for any length of time. At the moment it is not clear what plans he has got in his mind. The present rush to the channel ports seems to be a revised edition of the Schliffen Plan with a dash of Napoleon thrown in. Does he want to make a mass aerial attack on Britain? Or does he want to reduce south-west England to dust and ashes by long-range artillery bombardment from the shores of France? Does he want to subjugate France and dictate separate terms of peace to it? All those questions are very pertinent at the present moment. Germany might have succeeded in her present offensive but it is not so easy to gain her objective, whatever that might be. In the first place, the attempts to drive a wedge between the two Allies are not likely to succeed. Secondly, nine-tenths of France is yet free to fight with its back to the wall. And finally the resources of the whole world are behind the Allies.

It is inconceivable, as Mr. Churchill said in his admirable broadcast, that an army of three to four millions, should suddenly collapse. It is still more inconceivable that, whatever Fifth Columns might be standing in their midst, democratic nations like France and Britain should be demoralised. On the other hand the morale of the people of France and Britain was never stronger than to-day when their very free existence is in peril. Demos, like Rip Van Winkle, is at last waking up, when the shells have begun to explode at its very feet. The fatal complacency, the sheer refusal to face facts, which had gripped the two nations since the last war and which apparently (from the amazing disclosures that are being made in press and parliaments) did not leave them even when the war was declared nine months ago, has at last given way to a sense of reality and a grim determination to see it through. The Bonnets and the Chamberlains lie in disgrace to-day; the Cagoulards and the Fascists are receiving short shrift and every man and woman is being marshalled to defend the precious thing called liberty. In France the return of men like Petain and Weygand and Mandel, who bear the mantles of Foch and Clemenceau, has galvanised the whole nation into a new life. In Britain the Parliament surrendered in three hours the people's hard-won liberties of six centuries to the Government so that the nation may remain free. And it is indeed an irony that it should fall to the lot of a Labour leader like Attlee to pilot this Bill. Totalitarianism is thus being fought with totalitarianism and the result need never be in doubt. ....only if it does not prove too late!

Was it Mr. Lloyd George who coined the brilliant mot that "Germany may win the battles, but we win the war?" Well, Germany is once again winning battles in unrelieved succession,—bloodless and bloody—from Austria to Boulogne for four long years now. To-day the German military machine is at its very peak: how high and how deadly that peak is, nobody

knows. The optimism of the Allies' ultimate victory is thus tempered by a lively appreciation of the Nazi might. Their empires are in peril; their very free existence is at stake. They will require every ounce of energy, courage and faith to see it through.

May 31, 1940

It was the ruthless use of the bomber and the landing of thousands of parachute troops, which subjugated Holland in five days as it had done Poland in fifteen. But the amazing utility of the air arm was never more strikingly witnessed than in the invasion of Northern France. The spectacle of tanks and other mechanised troops supported above and on the flanks by bombers and other auxiliary aeroplanes, sweeping everything in their path was something never seen in history before. The Nazi triumphal march from Sedan to Boulogne in less than ten days, in spite of the fierce resistance of the French army and the harassing fire by the R. A. F., was a tribute to the thoroughness with which Goering has done his job. Added to the efficiency of the German planes is the utter unscrupulousness of the Nazi pilots. There is no distinction of combatants and non-combatants, military and civil objectives, the able and the disabled, men and women for them. In fact they delight to bomb and machine-gun fleeing refugees, ambulance unit and hospital ships, as has been testified to by neutral American observers in a number of places. Their aim is purely to strike terror into the heart of the opponent and to demoralise him into abject submission.

Man for man and machine for machine the Allied forces may be better than the German. But the Nazis have a preponderating weight of numbers in their favour as is being daily manifest in all sectors of war. The British and French claim to have put 2,000 German planes out of action during the last two weeks but

nobody knows how many more they have got! And until this discrepancy is made up, one cannot view the future with equanimity.

Some weeks ago, Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Air Minister, informed the House of Commons that the British production rate had caught up with that of the Germans. Similar assurances were being periodically given by his predecessors too. In retrospect it all appears criminally exaggerated. The present annihilation of Allied troops in Flanders and the massacre of innocent civilians in France can be directly attributed to the absence of sufficient aeroplanes. "If only they would give us more planes, we would tell the Germans a different story." "Our airmen have done magnificent work but it is the volume that we need": Such are the comments being made by the gallant soldiers that are being at present extricated from the Flanders death-trap.

That the spectre of an invasion of Britain has assumed very real proportions is evident from the feverish preparations that are being made in Britain to forestall such an attack. Not since 1088 has an enemy landed on British soil and that it should be left to an ex-house painter not only to conceive but to be on the point of executing such a stupendous plan is one of the supreme ironies of history! He has good reason to thank his British friends and appeasers that to-day he is standing on the leaping board as it were.

The capitulation of the Belgian army last Tuesday on the order of King Leopold came as a severe blow to the Allies. It no doubt amounted to a gross betrayal of the British and French forces which were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Belgian army, but now that the first shock has been absorbed, it is possible to view King Leopold's amazing action with a certain detachment. One conclusion is irresistible. Faced with the slaughter and carnage around him, the King, after heroically fighting at the head of his soldiers for

19 days, suddenly seems to have lost his nerve as well as his perspective. His forces were greatly inferior in equipment to the Nazis and there is reason to believe that, in the typical bully manner, the German fury was in a special measure unleashed against the Belgians. Notwithstanding their numerous drawbacks, the Belgian soldiers fought gallantly. It is said that out of a force of eight hundred thousand men only three hundred thousand were left when the King gave the order to lay down arms. This is at once an evidence of the heroism of the Belgian soldiers and of the terrible toll taken by the Nazis. Add to this the fact that not only Belgian soldiers but also civilians were rained with bombs and machine-gun fire for days on end and one can visualise the grim ordeal that must have faced the King on that fateful day.

Premier Reynaud in his bitter broadcast on Tuesday condemned King Leopold in no uncertain terms. In the retrospect, however, one would be better advised to suspend judgment until the full facts are known. In the first place let us note the data: Denmark surrendered without even a show of fight. Norway, which though it has not surrendered as yet, has done little fighting either. Holland which is bigger both in area and resources gave up the fight in five days, Poland, which has four times Belgium's population and which was doing no amount of sabre-rattling before the war, lay prostrate before the Nazis in less than two weeks. Belgium, with her tiny resources and slender army, fought on gallantly for 18 days (within which time the Nazis had marched from one end of France to another) and gave up only when it was hemmed on all three sides in a veritable deathtrap. If it lost half a million men, it must have also inflicted an equal punishment on the enemy. The Nazis had to fight every inch of their way in Belgian territory and the defenders of the forts of Namur and Liege fought on long after they were no more than islands in a Nazi ocean!

Let us not forget all those facts in the bitterness of our disappointment. King Leopold may be a betrayer and a traitor to the Allies but he was also human enough not to view the utter extinction of his own people with equanimity. He may have lost his nerve but we cannot certainly dub him a craven coward. And there are grounds to believe from Sir Roger Key's appeal to suspend judgment (the Admiral was with the King till late on Monday evening) that the charge that the King took his fateful decision without so much as informing the Allied commander in Belgium is not altogether warranted by facts.

Whatever that may be, it cannot be denied that the sudden defection of the Belgian army has made the position of the Allied forces in Flanders most unenviable. They have no hopes of holding the terrain in view of the overwhelming numbers hurled against them and all they can do is to extricate themselves by fighting skilful rearguard actions. And this they are doing with magnificent courage and grim determination. Nowhere is there a sign of demoralisation and indeed the morale of the troops was never higher. The Germans were reported to have thrown 40 divisions totally to annihilate those armies and the lot of the B. E. F. and their French comrades can thus easily be imagined. Notwithstanding all the odds against them, the evacuation is proceeding according to plan. Meanwhile the Germans are receiving severe punishment and are paying heavily for every inch of advance towards the coast. Strange as it may appear, the present retreat will remain one of the most glorious chapters in military annals.

What will be the position when the last of the B. E. F. has withdrawn from Dunkirk and all the Channel ports are free to Hitler? In the first place the situation on the Western Front will be very much simplified. While Flanders was monopolising the attention of the German General Staff, General Weygand has prepared a new defence line stretching from

Abbeville in the West via the rivers Somme and Aisne to Montmedy in the Maginot Line in the East. Behind this line will be massed the flower of the French army under new commanders and it is obvious that the decisive battles of the present war will be ultimately fought on those lines.

The new dispositions are very much favourable to the defenders lying as they do across the course of two rivers. And General Weygand will see that there will be no repetition of the costly mistakes on the Meuse, where somebody left the bridges intact for the German army to pour in. Though one must not minimise the immense gains of the Nazis, it will do us well to note in perspective that during the last war, the Kaiser's armies had penetrated very much deeper into the heart of France and had imperilled Paris itself. The position, as far as France is concerned, is more advantageous now than it was in the worst days of the last war.

Are the Nazis deliberately heading towards the West instead of the South? They may have decided to follow von Epp's Plan in preference to its Schlieffen prototype and made the invasion—and subjugation—of Britain the main aim of their strategy. From Boulogne right to Trondheim in Norway the ports and coastal aerodromes are or will soon be in German hands. This will serve as a vast spring-board for simultaneous attack by sea and air upon Britain. Perhaps they will try to land troops in Eire, too, in advance. All this makes the outlook for Britain no doubt extremely grave but one need not take an alarmist view of the possibilities of an invasion.

In the first place there is that "little ditch" to guard Britain. It baulked Napoleon once and it will surely baulk Hitler, too, bombers or no bombers. There is the Royal Navy like a steel ring protecting the shores of Britain. Besides one can trust General Weygand not to remain a dumbfounded spectator of

the show. As soon as his work of consolidation is over, he is sure to exert the maximum pressure on the German forces.

June 7, 1940

Make no mistake about it. The battle which began on the Western Front in the early hours of Wednesday last is not a battle for positions on the Somme or the Aisne. It is not merely a push to Paris or a drive to the remaining ports on the west or an attempt to turn the Maginot Line in the east. It is not a battle with limited objectives. It is a Battle for France itself.

This is the reason why it is going to be the most bloody, the most long-drawn and the most decisive battle of the present war. On the outcome of this battle will depend the fate of France—and of Britain, too. Not for nothing did M. Reynaud in his brilliant broadcast to his people on Thursday night invoke the memories of the Generals of the Revolution and the Admirals of the French Kings. Not for nothing did Mr. Churchill in his heroic speech to the Commons on last Tuesday talk of carrying on the struggle on land and on sea and in air, "on beaches and landing grounds, in fields and streets and hills" till victory is won. Those two men, whom Providence has thrown at the head of two nations at the greatest juncture of their history, realise the deadly peril in which, thanks to the short-sightedness of their predecessors, their people stand at present. Not only their freedom and their possessions, but their very civilisation and souls are now at stake!

Strange as it may appear, more than Reynaud and Churchill, Hitler himself recognises this too well. That is why he has launched the latest offensive all along the 120 miles front in spite of the immense losses which his armies had to suffer during the last four weeks. Hitler has struck again, while his adversaries

are yet reeling under the earlier hammer blows. And I have no doubt whatever that he will now strike with all his might and main.

As it is, he has already lost more than a week, while awaiting the result of the Allies' debacle in Belgium, following the defection of King Leopold and while deciding whether Britain or France was to be the next objective of his attack. He had the mortification of seeing ninety per cent of the Allied forces eluding the Flanders death-trap, though the strategic advantages he has gained cannot be exaggerated. Meanwhile General Weygand had utilised the breathing space in reforming his lines on the Somme and the Aisne and on reassembling the French armies under new commanders. Behind this new front stand the people of France and Britain, united as never before, working with the fierce energy of men whose eyes have been opened at long last, with the enemy ramming at the half-broken door.

Not those two people alone, but the peoples of their far-flung Empires, and the peoples all the world over, who value freedom and democracy, are furiously busy lending a helping hand to the Allies. Every day, every hour, the immense war potential of the Allies is being translated into guns and shells and aeroplanes and tanks. The great United States is no longer a neutral, though it yet remains a non-belligerent. Every resource of its gigantic industries, every stratagem of its wooden laws, every fibre of its sympathy is being pressed into service for the Allies. The very army arsenals of the U. S. A. are being "spring-cleared" to compensate for the Allies' huge losses in Flanders.

Hitler is too much of a realist to miss the significance of all this. He may be conscious and legitimately proud of having won the biggest battle of all times, as he observed in his proclamation to the German people. But he knows that he has yet to win the war. He knows that the sands of time are running out

against him, that every day of war, while it gives more power to the elbow of the Allies, serves as a slow strangulation to the Reich, whatever brilliant victories his soldiers may win in the field. He is thus not merely actuated by dreams of German hegemony over Europe, and even of world domination but is also equally impelled by the doom that faces him if he delays and hesitates. Even in his hour of victory, for which he has paid a fearful price after all, Hitler knows that he can't tarry to consolidate his gains and to recoup his losses. He has to ride on his totalitarian tiger, until the natural conclusion of his present Blitzkrieg, which is nothing short of the subjugation not only of France and Britain, but of the whole of Europe—Soviet Russia not excluded, as Stalin knows too well.

Nazi Germany, in other words, is not in a position to conduct a war of attrition, even though today she has Austria and Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway and Denmark, Holland and Belgium and the rich districts of Northern France as milch-cows in her stable. No doubt all the natural resources and even the man power of those unhappy neutrals are at the mercy of the Nazis, but then it must be remembered that even Kaiser's Germany, which too, had almost an equal area to draw upon in the last war could not stave off her collapse in the long run.

Some surprise has been expressed over Hitler's abrupt decision to open a new offensive on what is now known as the Weygand Line, as it was presumed from his rush to the sea that he intended to launch his next attack on Britain. His adhesion to the Schlieffen Plan is, however, easily explained by strategic reasons. In the first place the decisive terrain of war is France and not Britain. Secondly the time lost in the sensational aerial attack on Britain will not only be utilised by France in consolidating her new positions, but in preparing a counter-offensive. Tactically, he thought it safer, therefore, to try to bring France to her knees before tackling Britain. The present

offensive has thus been launched on the whole 120 mile front on the Somme and Aisne, stretching from east to west. It is being conducted with the usual methodical efficiency of the German General Staff and with the reckless valour of the German soldier. On the first day the offensive was said to be conducted on the classic lines but since then the aeroplane-tank combination, which has proved so successful so far, has again been resorted to, with a heedless disregard for the losses so far incurred.

According to French military circles, the battle is so far considered to have gone quite satisfactorily for the Allies. It is true, however, that the Nazis have made slight advances in a number of centres. In view of the colossal military machine at the command of the Nazis, we must be prepared for reverses yet. The Nazis may suddenly thrust themselves through a comparatively weak spot as happened at Sedan. General Weygand has given orders to his commanders to resist the German onslaught whatever the cost. And if they succeed in doing that and in pinning down the Germans to a positional warfare as distinct from the war of movements which they have so far conducted (and to which they are suited both temperamentally and by the basic nature of their new mechanized strategy), the Allies will have half won the war.

June 14, 1940

Whatever may be the reactions and ultimate result of Italy's participation in the war on the side of her Axis partner, it has at any rate ended the intolerable suspense of the last nine months. From the very first day of war there was not the least doubt as to where Italy's sympathies lay. Right from the beginning the Fascists have been shouting from the house-tops that they were only non-belligerents, not neutrals. For

many weeks now the Duce has been threatening to declare war on "the decadent pluto-democracies"!

There was not the least surprise, therefore, when on the night of Monday, June 10, Mussolini declared from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia that the Italian armies were given orders to march against the Allies. There was almost a sigh of relief that the protracted tension was finally over, that the situation in the Mediterranean was at last clarified and that the powerful Allied armies, which were so long immobilised at strategic stations in the Near East could spring back to life and take their due share in the fighting. Naturally, there was resentment, too, at the manner and hour of the Duce's declaration of war. Like a jackal he was awaiting the outcome of the titanic struggle that was going on in Poland and Norway, Holland and Belgium and France all those months. Just when the war had moved into its critical phase and the Allies' hands were fully engaged in meeting the totalitarian challenge of the Nazis on the very outskirts of Paris, Mussolini decided to plunge his treacherous dagger into the back of his neighbour. There have been few blacker episodes in history.

It is necessary to take a retrospective view of the relations between the Allies and Italy to realise the utter unscrupulousness of Mussolini's betrayal. There was nothing in the present situation which warranted the Duce's resort to arms. Both the British and French statesmen have again and again stressed their willingness to decide amicably all the outstanding issues. There was between Italy and Britain the Gentlemen's Agreement guaranteeing the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. Even the blockade against Italy was not being enforced very stringently even though there was ample proof that Italy was passing on many of her imports to Germany. True, at the beginning of the Abyssinian War, Britain took the lead in imposing sanctions against the aggressor but then, in the first place, that vigorous policy of collective security was dropped long

before it could do any material damage to Italy and, secondly, during the last few years the Chamberlain Government did its level best to appease Mussolini—along with Hitler—and mutually to forget the sanctions phase in Anglo-Italian relations.

There has indeed been a traditional friendship between the Allies and Italy. The French and the Italian are descended from the same Latin stock; they share the same religion and essentially a common culture. It was Frenchmen as much as Italians who helped to rid Italy from the Austrian yoke. The heroes of the Risorgimento found an asylum in Britain. Mazzini and Cavour, who were loved and honoured as much in Britain as in Italy, must have veritably turned in their graves after the tragic twist given to Anglo-Italian relations by the Fascist rulers of Italy in the gravest hour of Britain's history. In the speech he made at the University of Virginia on Tuesday, President Roosevelt described the continued efforts he has been making to maintain the neutrality of Italy. He promised Mussolini that if the latter desisted from going to war, the President would be willing to ask for assurances from the other Powers concerned that they would execute faithfully any agreement made to effect the readjustments desired by Italy.

In spite of all these historical antecedents and diplomatic appeals, the Duce has thrown in his lot with the Nazis believing that he will reap his share of the plunder. How far will his anticipations be fulfilled? In the first place, if the time-serving Mussolini thinks that either France or Britain are in their last gasps, he is very much mistaken. No doubt all the rounds of the present battle have so far unfortunately gone against them but, far from being down and out, they are yet delivering blow for blow. Besides, the sympathy and active help of the whole world, which has now become really alive to the Nazi menace, will be freely available to the Allies.

In the second place, Italy will have soon to pay a heavy price for her incursion into the conflict. Strong Allied forces have long been on guard in the strategic centres of the Near East and all around the Mediterranean and it will not be long before Italy's African Empire becomes a departed glory. The Abyssinians are already in revolt and, apart from the loss of the Empire, the large number of Italian troops, which are stationed in Africa will soon become virtual hostages of the Allies. In the Mediterranean itself which the Duce has long been claiming as an "Italian Lake," the Royal Navy is both vigorous and vigilant. The eastern part of the Mediterranean is commanded by British bases at Haifa, Alexandria and Cyprus while in the Western Mediterranean the French are equally strong. And right at the centre is the strongly-fortified Malta, which has become the main target of Italy's air attacks since the declaration of hostilities.

Italy herself is extremely vulnerable to attacks, both from the sea and the air and a number of her towns have already received the attention of Allied bombers. Again it must be remembered that the border between France and Italy is mountainous and thus easy to defend. That is, perhaps, why Italy has so far not launched her threatened land attack on France and is content with aerial bombardments. Italy probably hopes for a quick decision in her favour like her Axis partner. She can raise an army of about two million—part of which is said to be already in action with the German soldiers on the Western Front—a presentable navy, preponderating in torpedo boats and submarines, and an air force variously estimated between 2,000 and 5,000 planes. The easygoing Italian, however, makes a very poor soldier. No doubt the Duce has done his best to instil martial virtues in him and the victory in Abyssinia and Spain has given a certain new confidence to him. It remains to be seen, therefore, how he acquires himself under his new Nazi masters.

Adowa, Caparetto and Guadalajara are so many graves of Italy's military reputation. It is the Germans who have been the most contemptuous of the fighting qualities of their new Allies and Bismarck, with his Teutonic bluntness, once called Italy a nation of poltroons. Her extremely low economic capacity is, above all, Italy's real drawback. She is dependent upon other countries for almost every commodity, which is essential for the conduct of war and the heavy industries, which she has so laboriously built up during the last two decades, will soon be crippled for want of raw material. Even in foodstuffs she is not self-supporting in spite of all the efforts at agricultural autarchy. When it is realised that the blockade will now be stringently enforced against her and that there are no hopes of getting any raw materials from Germany, which is herself much worse off, one understands how Mussolini has staked the future of his country on the chance of a quick victory. If the war continues a little longer than the Duce has bargained for, the extremely low war potential of his country is bound to drag him speedily to his doom.

With the sweeping down of the Allied Armies from the Weygand Line, Paris appeared a doomed city from the first day of the last week. But one hoped till the very end that a miracle would save it, as it saved it during the last war. But it was not to be and for the second time in a century, the German armies entered its historic gates on Thursday (June 13, '40) evening, the French Government having decided to surrender it rather than allow it to be sacked and burnt by Nazi bombers and guns. It is a bitter blow to the French. It is a black day for the Allies. And it is a tragic event for every lover of democracy. Paris was not only the capital of France. In a sense it was the capital of the whole world.

Artists and authors, connoisseurs and the elite of the earth flocked to Gay Paree as iron filings flock to

the magnet. It was the home of art and culture, the haunt of virtue and vice, the rendezvous of plutocrats and paupers. It was the glorious atelier where the French Revolution forged a new era of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, not only for France but for the whole world. Now this historic city, this beautiful and precious city, echoes the war cry of the Nazis as ancient Rome must have echoed the barbaric cries of the Teuton hordes from the North. With Vienna, Prague and Warsaw it passes from the light of civilisation into the totalitarian blackout. . . . .

June 21, 1940

### France has Fallen!

And yet it is only half a truth to say that France has fallen. As Jaures said, "Who strikes at France, strikes at the freedom of mankind." France will not fall as long as there is a single human being who cherishes the word "Freedom." The German Mechanized Attila may overrun the length and breadth of the country. The *Sieg Heil—Sieg Heil* of the triumphant Nazi legions may be echoed from every nook and corner of the nation, that, for the time being, lies prostrate at their feet. The German Eagle may proudly flutter its wings over the Arc de Triomphe. The Swastika may desecrate the tomb of the Great Napoleon. . . . .

These are no doubt all too unmistakable signs of defeat. Marshal Petain, the Saviour of France in the last war, has himself confessed her to be beaten in the present one. Those heirs of great military traditions have sued for peace at the hands of their foes. The big battalions of Hitler and the incredible blunders of her own Generals have brought a great nation to its knees. But France is not broken. She has not surrendered her precious heritage of liberty. At the time of writing it is not known what terms are offered by the Dictators to their vanquished enemies but some believe—and hope—that if the terms are wantonly

humiliating, the people of France may yet resume the struggle.

How came it to pass that within a little more than a month of actual fighting, a great nation has had to own defeat? Let the octogenarian Petain himself answer: "On May 1, 1917, we still had 3,280,000 men under arms, despite three years of murderous fighting. On the eve of the present battle we had half a million fewer. In May, 1918, we had 85 British divisions; in May, 1940, we had only ten. In 1918 we had with us 58 Italian and 42 American divisions. The inferiority of our material was even greater than of our effectives. French aviation has fought at the odds of six to one."

All this is undoubtedly true. But numbers do not explain everything. It is mainly the inefficiency and the complacency of the predecessors of Petain—with the honourable exception of M. Reynaud—which have led to the present plight of France, which had to bear the full brunt of the fight. Historians will hold Chamberlain and Daladier far more responsible than Hitler for the debacle of the Allies.

The Maginot Line, which was a great engineering and strategic achievement, has proved a spiritual death-trap for the French Commanders. While the German Generals were devoting all the resources of science and strategy to the development of a new war technique—the 'Blitzkrieg'—General Gamelin and his colleagues seem to have dozed behind the ferro-concrete wall of the Maginot Line! It is one of the greatest tragedies of France—and a triumph of Germany—that this chain of impregnable fortresses, which was to serve as the guardian of France, has been broken without virtually firing a gun! The Allied High Command do not seem to have entertained such an eventuality even in their dreams before it was too late. And this, when the Nazi Army had given a very successful demonstration of the Blitzkrieg technique as long ago as last September in Poland.

From the fact that half-hearted fighting has been going on along with the negotiations for armistice, some people are inclined to hope that even now the French may turn round and decide to continue the struggle. But a factual appraisement hardly warrants such a belief. In the first place the complexion of the new French Cabinet is hardly inspiring. The inclusion of pro-Fascists like Bonnet and Flandin is an ominous sign for the future of France—and Britain, too! Secondly even if a struggle is again decided upon, it can hardly be waged now upon the soil of France. What is more important at the moment is the future of the French navy, which is yet intact and in fine trim, and the French Air Force. If the former falls in the hands of Hitler, it will be a severe handicap to Britain.

Reading between the lines of the numerous contradictory messages that are pouring from France during the last few days, it appears that while the French Army Commanders have advised suing for peace—which means, after all, surrender!—on a purely objective basis, civilian statesmen like M. Reynaud apparently wanted to continue the struggle and thus keep the plighted troth to their Ally. The terrible carnage of the manhood of France has obviously forced the latter into silence but those who know France and its history feel convinced that, left to themselves, the brave people would not have so quickly bowed the knee before their foes.

There is a terse saying coming from the days of the Revolution that “In France every army is a rabble and every rabble is an army.” This is a just tribute to the gallantry and love of liberty of the French *citoyens* and *citoyennes*, but alas! the scales are too heavily weighted against them even if they rise up spontaneously here and there to defend their ancient liberties. Hitler’s armies have already captured most of the strategic centres of the country and their deadly weapons will make short work of all civilian opposition.

To sum up the international situation after the fall of France, that Ally must be given up as a total loss and if the French Navy falls into the rapacious hands of the Fuehrer, it will prove a distinct liability to Britain. Again Japan has lost no time in casting its covetous eyes upon Indo-China. It is very likely that the Axis Powers may try to bring their erstwhile partner back into the fold by giving it that dainty morsel and thus consolidating their position in the Far East. But Japan also knows that such a violent disturbance of the *status quo* will be tolerated neither by Britain nor by—what is most important—the United States, whose Navy is yet very leisurely manouevring in the Pacific. The Dutch East Indies, too, are not free from the Japanese menace and a *coup d'état* will surprise nobody who is acquainted with the smash-and-grab technique of the Fascist Powers.

The United States seems to be genuinely alarmed as much by those possible dangers in the East as by the sudden collapse of France in the West. The appointment of Col. Knox and Mr. Stimson to the U.S.A. Cabinet and the bill for compulsory military training introduced in the Congress are the measure of this alarm. The Neutrality Act, which debarred all American intervention in the European hostilities, is now virtually a dead letter and the United States are easily the biggest producers of armaments in the whole world to-day.

Events in South America and the mysterious explosions in New York itself must have given further cause for the swing of American opinion. The Nazis have never disguised their attempts to fish in the troubled waters of South American Republics and with the smashing of democracies in Europe, Hitler will lose no time in extending his activities to America. The Soviet, however, remains the biggest question mark in Europe in June 1940 as in June 1939. It is in Stalin's power, more than anybody else's, to cry a halt to the unhindered march of the Nazi Juggernaut.

Hitler has a very healthy fear of the might of the Red Army and its every little movement on the German-Soviet border in Poland is watched with great anxiety by the German General Staff.

Stalin cannot but be apprehensive over the amazing success which the Hitlerian Blitzkrieg has met in the West. In fact it has upset all his clever calculations. If Hitler is allowed to get away with all his military gains, Germany will be immeasurably stronger than it ever was. The Nazi ambitions in Ukraine are too notorious to be forgotten by the Soviet. It will be indeed a matter of months after the successful end of hostilities in the West for the Nazi armies to march into the East of Europe. All this makes Nazi-Soviet relations most delicate. Stalin has already immobilised Hitler in the Baltic as also the Balkans. What will he do next?

All those currents and cross-currents of European and international diplomacy must be taken into consideration when one notes the resolution of the British Government and people to fight on "until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of men." As one read of the French collapse, one felt momentarily stunned. But once again in 1940 as in the days of Napoleonic supremacy in the early nineteenth century, Britain has, in the ringing phrases of Churchill, become "the sole champion in arms to defend a world cause."

The fight will go on. And the whole world is watching with bated breath this mortal struggle between Freedom and Fascism.

The future of the world depends on its outcome.

June 28, 1940

I observed last week that the inquest over the fall of France should be reserved for the future historian. But the astonishing revelations made by Premier Churchill

in the House of Commons last Tuesday and the news that is trickling from French refugees, British evacuees and neutral journalists makes one revise one's earlier views altogether. One begins to wonder now whether it was the defeat of the army or the betrayal by a caucus which was really responsible for the fall of a great nation.

It was all so sudden and catastrophic. Between the initial thrust at Sedan and the final suing for armistice intervenes a period of barely two months. It seems inconceivable that an army of four or five millions should confess itself beaten within this period. It seems still more unbelievable that a brave people like the French with their whole Empire intact, with a powerful ally like Britain at their side and the sympathies of the whole world behind their back should so completely collapse like a punctured bladder. The fall of France in June 1940 appears indeed to be one of the imponderables of history.

The present surrender of France cannot be compared, for example, with the German surrender of 1918, as it is being wrongly done. Germany at the end of the last war was a broken nation in every sense of the term. Four years of fighting on a number of fronts had taken a catastrophic toll not only of the German fighting forces but also of the German people. The nation was left without a friend, all its belligerent partners having concluded separate armistices with the Allies. The country was on the verge of starvation owing to the British blockade. The discipline in the army and the navy had become extremely lax, a number of sailors having in fact mutinied at Kiel. And, finally, the German people themselves were rising in revolt against the Kaiser's government.

Compare this picture of Germany in November 1918 with that of France in June 1940. While twenty-two years ago it was the German people themselves, actively supported by large groups of war-weary soldiers and sailors, who compelled the generals

and the Government to sue for peace, to-day it is a caucus of demoralised generals, who hold control of the government, which has compelled the French army whose morale was never higher inspite of all its losses in men and material, to lay down arms, and a people who were kept utterly in the dark about the real facts to grovel in dust before their foes.

Only a few weeks ago, the brave M. Reynaud, then Premier, was talking of fighting the Nazis from the colonies even if their armies were pressed out of the fatherland. But to-day, it is left to the colonies to revolt against the mother country and to fight for the honour of France. While it was the indiscipline of the German army and navy which forced the hands of the Hohenzollerns in 1918, to-day in 1940, the French army and navy has to revolt after the surrender to wipe out the stain on their escutcheon.

It was therefore more an internal debacle than an external defeat which accounts for the tragedy of France. Hitler has certainly every reason to gloat over his historic victory but it was due not so much to his own Blitzkrieg as to the dissensions among the French leaders. At the crucial hour of France's destiny a wrong set of people happened to control the Republic. It is they, the defeatist Generals, the friends of Fascism and the plutocracy—the notorious Two Hundred Families who yet remain the financial masters of France—more than the Nazi bombers and tanks, who have brought the French to the present pass.

If the ferro-concrete walls of the Maginot Line have proved the spiritual death-trap of the French army commanders, it is the flirtation with foreign Fascists of French politicians like Laval, Flandin, Bonnet and even Daladier, which has cost the French people their freedom. It will be remembered that while it was M. Daladier, who refused to honour the French obligations due to Czechoslovakia in 1938, M. Flandin went to the length of sending a congratulatory telegram

to Hitler on his triumph at Munich! And now that treachery has come home to roost!

There are very good grounds to believe that M. Daladier, for long before and after the war France's Premier and its so-called "strong man," has in fact proved its evil genius. It was he, more than the French General Staff, who was responsible for keeping the army so woefully ill-equipped with tanks and aeroplanes. It was he, who for lack of a clear-cut policy, left the French people disunited and disrupted with clashing ideologies on the eve of the war. Even after the nation had entered upon the great ordeal in September 1939, he misled his people—like his opposite in Britain—by his false optimism and fatal complacency. The history of the war would have been entirely different had there been a man like Tiger Clemenceau at the helm of France.

The fall of France is more a diplomatic than a military triumph for Hitler. Those who have read *Mein Kampf* are aware that the annihilation of France has been the first and foremost ambition of the Nazi Fuehrer. In fact it is the condition precedent of Nazi hegemony over Europe. The German Armies may have actually taken the field against France only ten months ago but the Nazi propaganda and Fifth Column has been very active in France for ten years now.

Slowly but gradually and unrelentingly the Nazi grip has been closing on France all those years. First Hitler sabotaged the French influence in the Balkans and especially in Rumania. Next with the help of his fellow-Dictator he drove a wedge between the traditional Franco-Italian alliance. After that at Munich he succeeded in divorcing France from her great ally in the East and made the way clear for the western Blitzkrieg. And finally with the help of the 84-year-old Marshal Petain, he has seduced France from her last and most powerful friend. To-day she lies at his

mercy to be bound hand and foot and kept as a perpetual vassal of Germany. Those myopic and ignorant persons who detect a "poetic justice" or a "moral retribution" in France's present plight for the part she played at Versailles can be hardly aware of the devilish ingenuity of the Nazis or of the use they want to make of a prostrate France.

Fortunately for France and fortunately for the freedom of mankind, France, though fallen, has not quite lost her soul yet. The heroic action of General de Gaulle in defying the Petain Government and forming a National Committee has evoked a magnificent response from his compatriots throughout the world. Some of the French Colonial Governors have decided to throw in their lot with de Gaulle and it is hoped that the French fleet, too, will not return to its home ports to be promptly confiscated by the Nazi-Fascist Powers, who have given a "solemn" assurance not to utilise it! Solemn indeed!

July 5, 1940

The suspense which was hanging over the future of the French Fleet for the last few weeks was solved in a melancholy manner on the evening of July 3rd. A great part of that Fleet is now safe in British ports, some part has been destroyed in the Anglo-French action off Oran and a part of it has reached its home port in a crippled condition. The Nazis will remain as high and dry as ever.

This is easily the most surprising and tragic episode of the present surprising and tragic war. There is not a prophet who could have foreseen this grievous dénouement of the Anglo-French Entente. That comrades who were waging the war against the common foe arm in arm only a month ago should be forced to fight between themselves is one of the greatest ironies of history. Inevitably it will cast its shadows on the

present and even the future relations of the two people.

Nothing could be fairer than the terms offered by the British Government to the French Naval Commander at Oran as elsewhere. The British Government did not certainly want to utilise the French fleet themselves; their only anxiety was to save it from Hitler's rapacious hands. As an earnest of their assurance they made various offers. The responsibility of the death of many gallant French sailors and of the loss of and damage to a number of fine French ships lies thus primarily upon the Petain Government and secondarily upon the French Admiral Gensoul. How thoroughly under the thumb of its Nazi masters the former is, can be seen by the orders which it is reported to have given to the French ships and merchant vessels, which are still on the High Seas, to scuttle themselves rather than fall into the hands of the British.

One effective and excellent result of the action at Oran will be finally to scotch the rumours that were being sedulously spread during the last few days that, following the surrender of the French Government, the British Government, too, were discreetly sounding the Nazis for armistice terms. That this is an unmitigated lie goes without saying. It is apparent to every realist that for Britain to seek such terms is to sign the death-warrant of her Empire with her own hand. The rumours were not only thick in the bazaars but even the neutral chancellories were buzzing with them. The comparative lack of hostilities at present further gave colour to those silly gossip. That is why Mr. Neville Chamberlain was compelled to break the silence, which he had scrupulously observed since his retirement from 10, Downing Street, and to deny categorically that there was any foundation for the peace rumours. It was heartening enough to hear this ex-Apostle of Appeasement talking of *guerre a mort*—

war to the death—and of Britain's resolution to defeat the Nazis.

But actions speak louder than words and the Oran episode will finally dispel all doubts and apprehensions about Britain's intentions. The reactions to Thursday's events not only in the British Empire but throughout the world and particularly in the United States have been most gratifying. Naturally they must have caused considerable chagrin to the Nazis whose fond plans have thereby gone agley.

France has not only gone to the Nazis but it is going Fascist itself! The reports that are trickling over the German broadcasts—the French Radio is of late not functioning according to the terms of the Armistice and no news of that unhappy country can pass out save such as is approved by its conquerors—make it certain that the reactionary elements are fast consolidating their position. The collapse of France itself was due to the activities of those pro-Nazi gentlemen and no surprise need, therefore, be caused at their attempts to entrench themselves in authority over the corpse of a free France.

Meanwhile the Nazis are busy in France, as they have been in every country from Austria to Belgium all those years. Behind the German armies comes the Gestapo and behind the Gestapo come the Nazi "locusts," as they are appropriately called. They are the men whose duty is to seize everything seizable and serviceable and to carry it to the Reich to keep the war machine going. The ancient conquerors like Tamerlane and Gengiz Khan plundered men only of their gold and silver. But the Nazis will pillage a people of everything from platinum to potatoes.

In Poland, for example, they have not left a knob on a door, while hundreds of thousands of Polish soldiers are taken as slaves to work on German farms! The opulent Dutch with their huge stocks of bacon and butter have not even sufficient bread left to eat to-day.

By confiscating all public funds, by compelling supplies from merchants, by manipulating currency, by offering worthless promissory notes and by every other method they can devise, the Germans are reducing half of Europe to penury and starvation.

### III

## THAT INVASION !

*We are waiting for the long-promised invasion;  
so are the fishes.*

—Winston Churchill

July 12, 1940

| T is almost a month to-day that the Battle Of France was lost and German troops entered Paris. That was virtually the end of organised French resistance and Marshal Petain soon after opened the negotiations for surrender. For a month now Britain is Hitler's only enemy. He is immeasurably more powerful today than he was when war was declared in September last. He dominates the whole European continent minus Russia. His writ runs from the Baltic to the Balkans, and from Brest-Litovsk to Brest. And yet the little sea-girt Kingdom eludes his grasp. Like Napoleon a century and a quarter ago he must be pacing and chafing on the Channel Ports, espying the white cliffs of Dover in the distance and praying for mastery of the seas just for a couple of hours.

Poland was vanquished within a fortnight. Denmark fell without a fight; Norway was a matter of hours; Holland was overrun in five days: Belgium struggled for 18 days before King Leopold's capitulation and France itself, reputedly possessing the finest army in the world, could not withstand the Blitzkrieg for more than a month. And yet to-day a month after the end of the first phase of the war, the final grand assault on Britain has not even begun. All her comrades in arms have fallen one by one and Britain now stands alone to brave the might of the Nazi hordes,

while at the feet of the Fuehrer lie half a dozen slave nations, hewers of his wood and drawers of his water.

Why is then Hitler hesitating to strike the final blow which, according to him, will annihilate England and make him master of all he surveys? Where is the hitch in his war machine? Everything went according to the Nazi time-table until the subjugation of France—Paris was triumphantly entered—almost to the minute. The oft rehearsed scenes of the dictation of the armistice terms to the vanquished French armies were enacted in the very location decided long ago. But since then the time-table is upset; the calendar seems to have been temporarily rolled up. The Nazi soldiers are marking time while Hitler and his General Staff seem to be reassessing the strategical and diplomatic situation. And all the while Britain is growing more united, more determined, more ready than ever to meet the Nazi challenge.

What are the courses open to Hitler? In the first place—Peace or War? For, strange as it may seem, this is reported to have been one of the issues discussed at the Hitler-Ciano meeting in Berlin. The Axis Powers in other words want to put the seal of finality upon their ill-gotten gains. On the face of it, this report that Germany, who has won all the rounds—if not the honours—of the fight so long, should be willing for negotiated peace while Britain, who is on the defensive, should resolutely decide to fight to the bitter end, seems incomprehensible. But those who have followed the twists and turnings of Fascist diplomacy will be neither surprised nor misled by this latest exhibition of an ersatz olive branch by Hitler.

Secondly, it is obvious that the Nazis are finding that they have bitten more than they can chew. It was easy enough to cow one state after another into submission by the merciless use of the German mechanized Attila; but it is another to put any semblance of order in the regions occupied by German troops. The

underground opposition to Germany is yet strong as the arrest of the Dutch General Winklemann proves. With all normal trade and industry at a standstill and vast tracts of land left uncultivated, the continent of Europe is fast passing into chaos and starvation. The work of reorganisation and of the inauguration of the hundred per cent Nazi order in Europe is possible only when Germany is finally and completely triumphant. That consummation will not be reached as long as Britain is not only free herself but is also in a position to blockade the whole continent. No wonder Hitler is worried!

So then everything depends upon the extermination of Britain. But how is that to be accomplished is the great question that faces the Nazis. Not that the plans are lacking. Any number of them have been broadcast from the German Radio. But evidently without a fleet, their accomplishment is extremely difficult if not dangerous. The Luftwaffe is meeting more than its match in the R.A.F. In the biggest raid carried on Britain so far on Wednesday last by squadrons of bombers escorted by a large number of fighters, the Nazi losses were far too heavy and disproportionate to their gains.

It is evident that such dingdong struggles are not going to establish German supremacy over Britain. Neither does the Fifth Column, Hitler's greatest weapon, seem to have had any effect upon either the British classes or masses. Parachutists have no ghost of a chance now when the whole population is awake and alert day and night. The prospects of landing any decisive number of German troops in Britain appear to be more than ever remote. But these difficulties, if stupendous, are certainly not insuperable. Neither is Hitler the person to draw back from his objective however great the price he has to pay for its attainment. At any moment he may decide to launch his long-deferred attack upon Britain simultaneously

by air and water. While it is estimated that Germany has lost at least 2,500 planes since the opening of hostilities, her reserves and renewals are yet quite formidable.

The only fly in the ointment is that his bombers lack the support of the tanks, which crushed the French armies into pulp. On the other hand whatever may be the number of fast motor-boats she is building, the Royal Navy yet remains the mistress of the seas and will account for the former long before they reach the shores of Britain.

July 19, 1940

Hitler, that past master of the war of nerves, is carefully setting the stage for his war on Britain.

Evidently finding an aerial invasion of England a far more difficult and dangerous proposition than he believed it to be, he is maturing his plans and completing his preparations with the usual Teutonic thoroughness. Meanwhile he is indulging in a little window-dressing and talking of a final ultimatum. The joke is that the Nazis are calling it a *PEACE* ultimatum! It is only meant to save the poor Britishers from the holocaust that awaits them if they refuse to comply with the Fuehrer's order! It will be remembered that the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch and the Belgians—all were the recipients of those ultimatums, which were received after their countries were invaded and a few thousand men, women and children were bombed out of existence.

Britain is grimly prepared for those totalitarian tactics. She will neither ask for quarter nor give it. The month since the capitulation of France has been utilised to the minute in making Britain as invulnerable as is humanly possible. Reuter's Special Correspondent, who is at present conducting a tour of Britain's

defences, observes that they (the defences) are "like a plentiful summer crop." "Some of the neatest surprise packets that could be imagined are awaiting any attacker." Obviously this does not mean that Britain is now immune from invasion. But fortunately none in Britain itself shares that complacency and false optimism. An enemy on the offensive who is prepared to pay any price can certainly go near if not gain his objective. The task of the defender lies in exacting a toll which will stagger even a gambler like Hitler. And that the Britishers are bent upon doing. There is no loss of morale, no sign of defeatism and, above all, the Fifth Column which proved so useful to the Nazis so long has been resolutely rooted out from the soil of Britain. Verily Britain looks to-day, in the Shakespearean phrase, "a fortress built ..... against infection and the hand of war."

*July 26, 1940*

### *No Blitzkrieg Yet!*

That is the thought which occurs to each one of us every morning as we open our eyes and cast a tentative glance at the head-lines of the newspapers. Hitler is waiting still to launch the great offensive which will annihilate the British Empire—did he not proclaim himself the divine instrument thereof?—and make him the master of the world. The attack has been apprehended every day, every passing hour, for weeks now and yet there is no sign of the Luftwaffe winging over Britain like clouds of death.

Why this delay? Is Hitler hesitating? Is he afraid? Are his preparations not complete? Or has his war machine suffered more damage than the world is aware of and is it busy licking its wounds? I have begun to wonder whether Hitler's bark is not part of his bite. A deliberate, calculated, nasty part. In other words whether this war of nerves is not intended to weaken the morale of his enemy, to allow time for fissiparous

tendencies to assert themselves and to encourage the Fifth Column to raise its venomous head.

One must not forget that, in spite of all his military preparations extending over years, he waited for eight long and tortuous months before delivering the decisive blow on the Western Front. It was a masterly inactivity, whose psychological effects on his enemies were nothing short of disastrous. Hitler, in effect, sedulously pampered Daladier's fatal optimism. He encouraged Chamberlain's facile complacency which all but proved suicidal. Like a siren, he lulled the Allies into a false sense of security, which cost France its freedom.

Similar were the tactics adopted against the neutrals. Of course, their integrity and sovereignty were guaranteed by the Nazis time and again. The final formal assurances were in fact forwarded from the Wilhelmstrasse barely a few hours before their countries were actually invaded. In the case of the Low Countries, for example, the order to the Reichswehr to attack, which was originally timed for last November, was countermanded literally at the eleventh hour. Does the Fuehrer hope that this waiting game will gain him a victory at the right time once again? If so, he is doomed to disappointment. Every day of hesitation makes the chances of Hitler's success more remote and even problematical. There is a consensus of opinion on this point whatever may be the different theories regarding the postponement of the Blitzkrieg.

Fortunately, Britain has taken the lesson of the French debacle thoroughly to heart. There is neither demoralisation anywhere nor the least evidence of any excessive optimism. Britain, after three months of Churchill's premiership, is certainly ten times as strong as she was at the end of three years of the Chamberlain regime. But Winston is not the man to exaggerate his strength. On the other hand he has become the master of under-statement. His contract of "sweat and blood" holds good yet.

How does Hitler hope to conquer Britain? The German is a methodical being. He loves theorising and planning and putting everything shipshape before actually starting on his job. The invasion of Britain has long been a fascination for the Teuton mind. Many German strategists have paid close attention to this subject and a number of plans have been elaborated for the occupation of England.

The best-known among them and almost as famous as the Schlieffen Plan for Western Warfare which, modified by von Epp and brilliantly executed by General Keitel, Hitler's Chief of Staff, has met with such spectacular success, is the BANSE PLAN. Herr Ewald Banse is the Professor of Military Science at the Brunswick Technical College and he is held in high esteem by German strategists and military writers.

Prof. Banse proposes to grip Britain "as in a forceps from the West and the South-East." A simultaneous invasion is to be launched on all sides, the main landing to be in Norfolk and Suffolk, where "a force of 250,000 men could be got across before the Grand Fleet could intervene."

At the same time Kent and Sussex are to be invaded thus threatening London, the metropolis of the Empire, itself. Ireland is certainly not out of the picture. It is to be invaded, occupied and made the base of an attack on Liverpool and Wales. Next to London, the key industrial centres in the Midlands are to be the main target immediately after landing.

When Prof. Banse presented his plan, he hardly expected that Germany would command such complete mastery over Western Europe as she does today. So also, troop-carrying planes and parachutists can render decisive help to the invader. Today all the Channel Ports are in Nazi hands and it must be remembered that the attacker's artillery commands the Channel. With Calais and Boulogne in German hands it is, in the words of Prof. Banse, "a relatively simple

business to get an army across the Channel to the Kent coast."

Apparently it is a simple business—only on paper! Otherwise the Nazis would not have hummed and hawed so long instead of descending upon Britain straightway. Dunkirk, where the B. E. F. of 350,000 men was rescued literally from the jaws of death by a superb combination of Britain's fighting forces and the merchant navy, is probably serving as a writing on the wall for Hitler.

The Luftwaffe may presumably be in a position even today to rain death and destruction upon Britain. But the German air force by itself cannot capture Britain. There must be a substantial landing of troops. And there's the rub for the Nazis! Their navy and merchant fleet received a crippling blow in the fjords of Norway, while Britain to-day is the master not only of her own but also of the Norwegian, Dutch and French vessels. Hitler has the men ready to embark and the ports to embark them from! But where are the ships to carry them through the iron ring of the British Navy?

There is thus some force in the argument advanced by Air Marshal Sir Phillip Joubert De La Ferte that a full-scale invasion of Britain may never come off at all. Hitler, however, has confounded his critics more than once before and he is not the person to withdraw from a goal on which he has set his heart.

August 2, 1940

There is a fundamental military maxim that you should never do what the enemy expects you to do if only because the enemy expects it. Hitler seems to be closely following this advice, though so long his tactics have never been borrowed from the copybooks. His latest surprise seems to be not to surprise anybody!

The question is: Is he bluffing—or just jibbing? The former is comprehensible but not understandable; the latter, one can understand, but coming from a man like Hitler, it appears incomprehensible. In the first place the Fuehrer has bluffed the world once too often. Now nothing that he does or fails to do will catch anybody unawares, least of all Britain. The British people are at present grimly, imperturbably prepared for everything; they almost seem to dare Hitler to do his worst.

True, the suspense is almost becoming insufferable even to remote observers like ourselves. But if it is naturally so to Britain, it must be immeasurably worse to Hitler and the German people, who, masters of Europe, still remain slaves in their own Fatherland. Just one little, last Blitzkrieg stands between their present starvation and future opulence, the blackout and the light. Yet the Fuehrer seems disinclined to launch it in spite of all his vaunted might. Is it a Machiavellian bluff or just craven jibbing?—they, too, must be wondering! Such doubts among his followers bode no good for a dictator.

Hitler is no fool to believe that a negotiated peace is possible at this stage. Whatever slender hopes he may have entertained in this connection must have disappeared after the spirited rejection of his “peace” ultimatum by Lord Halifax and other British spokesmen. The time-limit set by him—he is scheduled to make his ceremonial entry into London on August 15—is also fast expiring. And yet the operation is not at all moving into its final, decisive stages even a month and a half after the fall of France. The official statement issued in Berlin protesting against the idea that the war against Britain is being waged only half-heartedly makes the situation more curious still. “For five weeks since the armistice, Germany has been striking daily and hourly”, says the statement and affirms that “Germany is waging war against England

with just as much determination as she did against Poland and France."

When we remember that this pronouncement is meant for home consumption, we can get a glimpse into the doubt and confusion which seem to be assailing the Nazi General Staff, who, it is notorious, are sharply divided among themselves about the advisability of an invasion of Britain. Such reassuring statements are supplemented with the frankly propagandist reports about the dire straits to which Britain is reduced as a result of the German "blockade." But even if he is gullible or loyal enough to believe it, such tales must be providing little consolation to the average German citizen who is on severely short commons for more than a year now.

This propaganda is being extended to Britain, too, and peace pamphlets are being rained upon the English countryside, with the hope that the British people would be dragooned into sacking war-mongers like Churchill and Eden and forming a new Government which will be more amenable to the Nazis. This wishful thinking on the part of Hitler and his advisers is itself an index of their fighting shy of the venture on which they have set their hearts. It is, indeed, an unmistakable sign of jibbing. But then, as I said at the outset, coming from Hitler it is apparently incomprehensible. Has he not always claimed that like a somnambulist he walks to his goal with firm and unfailing steps?

We must note in this connection the recent broadcast announcement of Mr. Edwin Hartridge, the American journalist, that during a conducted tour of occupied France he observed a dusk to dawn movement of German troops that had been in progress for days. Those troops were moving in a tremendous mass towards the French coast from the south-west as far north as the Belgian Channel ports. This can only mean an intensive preparation for the forthcoming Blitzkrieg. But then the official Nazi statement itself

pointed out that "the burden of the effort now rests on the shoulders of a few thousand men only—the crews of submarines, motor speed-boats and planes." Why are then the Nazi battalions moving towards the coast, unless the Fuehrer is confident of a victorious invasion? Is this another kind of wishful thinking?

The Konoye Cabinet has lost no time in laying a "New Order in the Far East" for the Land of the Rising Sun. The cocksureness with which the Japanese Jingoes have laid claim not only to Manchukuo and China but also to French Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies and the South Sea Islands would have been comic had it not been for its sinister significance against the present international background.

The enunciation of this full-blooded programme was preceded by the arrest of a number of British residents in Japan. Such things have not been altogether uncommon during the last three years but they resulted in nothing worse than the snatching of a few British trousers. But on the last occasion a Britisher, a responsible journalist, threw himself to death while being examined (obviously in the "third degree") by Japanese gendarmes. The Japanese war-mongers are, naturally, receiving the support of their Nazi friends in their present game.

Nothing would suit the Nazis more than that the war should spread to the Far East. A simultaneous offensive by all the three Big Fascist Powers would, they imagine, put Britain in considerable jeopardy. But one need not take too panicky a view of Japan's tub-thumping as long as she is stuck up to the neck in the Chinese "incident", the liquidation of which is itself taxing all her resources for the last three years.

August 9, 1940

The attention of the world is focussed now on North and North-East Africa where Mussolini seems to

have started the offensive. It was, indeed, high time that the Duce did something to prove that he was at war.

It is now two months since he plunged the Italian people into the maelstrom and during this period the Fascist fighting forces have done little save beat a precipitate retreat from the Royal Navy. One misses even the fiery orations of Mussolini from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia, which were the highlights of his non-neutral, non-belligerency phase. And he had nine long months to complete his martial preparations!

Surprisingly enough the first target for the Italian attack has been British Somaliland at the extreme north-east of the African continent. It is difficult to see why the Italian General Staff should have selected this particular theatre for its operations. British Somaliland is already surrounded on three sides by Italian territory. Its strategic value to Britain is not very high nor is there any heavy concentration of British troops.

It was generally expected that the Italian army in Abyssinia and Somalia would make a thrust into Kenya and Tanganyika. The latter Mandated Territory formed before the First World War the German East Africa and its deliverance from the British yoke ought to have been the first aim of the Fuehrer's Faithful Ally.

The Fascist legions did make tentative attacks on the Kenya border. But in the first place the Royal Air Force is in a strong position there and the offensive has come from them rather than from the Italian forces. Secondly, the British Garrison there is being heavily reinforced by South African troops, who were responsible for driving the Germans from East Africa in the last war.

It is thus understandable discretion on the part of the Duce not to enter upon any major warfare on the Kenya-Abyssinia border. Any severe reverse which the Italian forces may meet on this front will have

disastrous reactions upon Italy's position in Abyssinia. The Negus is already in Sudan and though his movements are for the time being shrouded in secrecy, he will naturally take the earliest opportunity to make a determined bid for the conquest of his lost kingdom. His very presence in Africa is causing considerable unrest among the Ethiopians and it is in the Duce's interest not to force the pace of things.

His decision to strike in British Somaliland is thus more negative than positive in character. It is essentially meant for home consumption. The capture of Zeila and other British stations must have been heavily boosted in the Italian press and it will for the present certainly succeed in bolstering the morale of the Italian people.

The British strategy is one of conducting a war of attrition in Africa while paying the major attention to the expected German Blitzkrieg on Britain. And this war of attrition is exactly what Italy is not prepared for. Her African garrisons are virtually isolated and though she must have accumulated sufficient military provisions in Libya and Abyssinia before she joined the war, they are not likely to last long owing to the character of modern warfare.

Apart from the loss of supplies from home, the anti-Italian feeling in Abyssinia is bound to grow from day to day and the whole "Empire" is likely to rise in revolt in the near future. Those waiting tactics, therefore, do not suit Mussolini in the least and signs are not wanting that he will soon launch a major offensive, perhaps simultaneously with Hitler's attack on Britain.

The invasion of British Somaliland is obviously the first phase of the attack and the only strategic consideration which can justify it is the command of the Gulf of Aden which the occupation of the territory is likely to give to the invader. But this is a remote possibility, indeed, considering that almost the whole of the Italian fleet is bottled up in the Mediterranean.

Most of the Italian submarines that were marauding in those waters have been accounted for and the British merchant ships are passing through the Gulf and the Red Sea with impunity. The proclamation of the Saudi Arabian Government that shipping routes are yet quite safe for pilgrims is itself a significant pointer to Britain's supremacy of the seas.

Unless and until Italy challenges and masters that supremacy, her position is bound to deteriorate gradually, whatever successes she may gain on land. There are not the remotest chances of such a consummation and it seems that Mussolini's main objective at present is a grand assault on Egypt from both the sides. The Italian troops—estimated at a quarter million—are already massed on the Libyan border and the zero hour is said to be imminent.

If this invasion of Egypt takes place, it is very likely to provide the major theatre of the present war. Egypt, which means Suez, is absolutely vital for Britain. It is for her the veritable life-line between the East and the West. From the very beginning of the war intensive preparations have been set afoot to guard this strategic centre of the British Commonwealth.

August 16, 1940

The last has been a crucial week in the European War; one may even call it decisive. In retrospect it may prove to have been almost the turning point of the present phase of hostilities.

Britain was to be occupied on August 15. Hitler was scheduled to take his breakfast in Buckingham Palace that morning and afterwards to broadcast from the B.B.C. Hitler is yet cooling his heels at Berchtesgaden.

The long-threatened Blitzkrieg did begin early in the week, though unfortunately for the Luftwaffe it

has only proved a boomerang! Strong formations of Junkers and Messerschmitts have been attacking convoys in the Channel and coastal towns in the south-east in waves after waves and they—or what remained of them—have returned to their home aerodromes only in driplets. Significantly, the German bombers are now strongly protected by fighter planes and their vulnerability has been further reduced by the short distances they have to fly owing to the Nazi occupation of Europe's entire Western seaboard. The weather, too, has been remarkably clear during the last week and the conditions were thus very favourable for the Blitzkrieg.

Undaunted by all those adverse circumstances the British Spitfires, Hurricanes and A.A. guns have taken a fearful toll of the attackers. Their "bag" is truly impressive as the following bald figures reveal. The number of German aircraft destroyed over British Coast and Channel during the last week was: Sunday 65, Monday 62, Tuesday 78, Wednesday 10, Thursday 88, Friday 144, making a total of 447 planes (in addition to those which were damaged and will thus prove unserviceable in the future) for barely six days. Eighty planes a day will surely keep the Luftwaffe away!

Formidable as those figures are, their significance is further stressed when we consider that the relative proportion of British losses has not exceeded four to one at the most. On Friday, when nearly a thousand German planes took part in a gigantic onslaught on Britain, the ratio has been much more favourable to Britain. The moral effects of such a development are incalculable and the R.A.F. may be expected to do still better as days pass by. General Goering must be a profoundly unhappy man today!

And what is the material damage the Germans have succeeded in inflicting in view of such reckless sacrifice of planes and pilots? It is really negligible. Here and there they no doubt succeed in sinking

a few ships and destroying a few buildings apart from killing or wounding a number of people. But this is not what the Blitzkrieg is meant for. The Nazi broadcasts are giving gruesome and lurid descriptions of the terrible holocaust their bombers are causing in Britain. They would have us believe that shipping is driven out of the Channel, that British Ports are congested to suffocation with merchantmen afraid to put to sea and that most of the British armament factories are forced to close down.

How mendacious this is, was signally proved when the British Government asked American and other foreign journalists to inspect any site which was attacked by German bombers. A party chose Bristol, which the German Radio claimed had suffered very great material damage and explosions. Here are a few extracts from a cable sent by an American to his paper: "Actually bombs have fallen in Bristol or the immediate vicinity only six times. Everybody agrees that the damage to the war effort has been nil. I found everything normal in streets, parks, shops and cinemas. German claims of widespread destruction must, therefore, have been for home consumption.... Bristol, except for the constant watch on the skies, is doing its normal job."

And this is true in fact of the whole of Britain—a Britain geared to war conditions. The Blitzkrieg has proved a tame show. The material destruction has been negligible after two months of intensive aerial warfare, while the British morale has never been higher than it is today. This demonstration of sheer "bull-doggedness" (if I may coin such a phrase) must have given a very bad jolt to the Fuehrer, whose Fifth Column and secret weapons and what not have so far proved singularly unavailing in his war on Britain.

The sure sign of Britain's growing confidence is provided by the fact that the R.A.F. is not content merely to be on the defensive against the Luftwaffe

but that it is conducting an air offensive on German skies almost daily. British bombers are visiting German industrial centres night after night and causing considerable havoc. They have penetrated as far as Berlin more than once and thus exploded Goering's boast that no British planes would be allowed to fly over German soil.

The fact is that Germany is as vulnerable as Britain to air attacks. Holland, Belgium and the whole of occupied France lie within a radius of 200 miles from the south-west of Britain. The Saar, Essen, Dusseldorf and Cologne, which comprise the chief industrial areas of Germany, fall within the 300 mile radius, while Berlin itself is less than 400 miles as the crow flies from Britain.

All these distances are easily navigable by modern bombers, as the Nazis are already realising to their cost. The industrial and armament output in Germany's western areas is already considerably hampered by the nocturnal visits of British pilots who are considerably helped in their task by the excellent aerial photographs they took in the beginning of war. The occupied areas in Holland, Belgium and France, too, are not immune from British attacks and in view of their use to the Nazis, the aerodromes, railway heads and ports in western Europe from Narvik to Brest are being constantly bombed.

Even if we dismiss the British reports of damage wrought in Germany as onesided and too optimistic, the observations from neutral countries tell the same tale. A report from Ankara, for example, says that owing to the effectiveness of British air raids, the Germans are moving their war industries eastwards from the Rhineland to Czechoslovakia. Another report refers to the large-scale exodus of Germans from the border towns to Paris as being safer from air attacks.

All this is extremely significant. But a bigger tribute to the R.A.F.'s striking capacity was provided by the successful attack which was launched on mili-

tary objectives in northern Italy on Tuesday night. Considering that the bombers had to fly some 1,600 miles (over France and Switzerland, too, *en route*) twice crossing the Alps at a height of three miles, this exploit will go down as a feather in the R.A.F. cap.

It seems as if the Balkan cauldron, which has been simmering so long, will at last boil over as a result of Italy's threats to Greece. The latter is accused of being responsible for the murder of an Albanian leader, Daut Hoggia, a charge which is as clumsy as it is farfetched and has been rightly stigmatised by a Turkish paper as being merely "a manouevre of incitement."

Why is Mussolini deliberately picking a quarrel with his neighbour? Those who know how long and eagerly Italy has coveted the Greek island of Corfu, which commands the entrance to the Adriatic, can easily give the answer. It may also be that the Duce hopes to profit further as a result of the flare-up in Balkans—his eyes have long been on Yugoslavia, too, —or that he is egged on by the Fuehrer to put a lighted match to the Balkan powder magazine.

In keeping with the usual Fascist tactics, Italy has already started underhand aggression, the sinking of a Greek destroyer in its home port being generally attributed to her. The tension has well-nigh reached grave proportions and the Axis moves in the Eastern Mediterranean will be watched with considerable anxiety.

August 23, 1940

It has been magnificent and it has been war. But the very brilliance of the R.A.F.'s exploits necessitates a word of warning.

True, the back of the Nazis' aerial Blitzkrieg is broken. Britain has taken a very heavy toll of the

Luftwaffe. It is authoritatively estimated that 1072 German aeroplanes have been destroyed in or near Britain since the war began, nearly 1,000 of which have been brought down in the last two months alone. This is undoubtedly a colossal loss for Germany, its significance being all the more heightened when we take a comparative view. If the proportion of the losses of German to British machines is about 5 or at least 4 to 1, that of pilots ranges between 30 and 20 to 1. On an average almost 20 per cent. of the German bombers and fighters met their doom in Britain's skies, while during the recent attack on Croydon not a single Nazi raider returned to tell the tale. The 20-acre dump of wrecked German planes somewhere in Britain represents a veritable grave of Marshal Goering's hopes!

It has been magnificent and it has been war. But let it be noted in this hour of triumph that the end of the war is yet nowhere near about. One must guard against the old complacency reasserting itself in the guise of over-confidence. On the other hand, the very fact that Hitler has been baulked of his breakfast in Buckingham Palace on the 15th of August means that the war will drag on for a pretty long time to come. "It is a long way to Tipperary...."

For Hitler a frontal attack on Britain, the last bastion of European liberty, must have appeared as the easiest and speediest way to ultimate and complete triumph. That is why land warfare has been at a standstill since the subjugation of France. That is why the Fuehrer has been so terribly anxious to prevent the Balkan cauldron from boiling over. That is why General Franco, after declaring his non-neutral non-belligerency immediately after Italy's entry into war, has been allowed to remain a non-combatant still. But now that Britain, far from being bombed into submission, is herself taking the aerial offensive and daily setting alight the industrial areas of Germany, Hitler will have to revise his strategy.

Not that he will drop the idea of an invasion of Britain. That will remain an *idee fixe* for a megalomaniac of his type and he will consider no price too heavy for the pursuit of his objective. He has a number of tricks up his sleeve yet. There are his Super Berthas to sweep the channel and to shell Britain itself from the French coast. They have already begun their lethal work from last Thursday. Then there are the E-Boats to torpedo merchantmen and the troop-carriers ready to land their quota of Nazis on Britain's soil. But all these at best are subsidiary weapons. They may inflict any amount of damage but they cannot solve the issue without the complete mastery of air. And it is obvious that, let alone mastery, the Nazis do not even command supremacy.

What will Hitler do next then? What can he do? He has got to force the issue. Nothing can be more fatal to his prestige now, when he is the master of half of Europe, than a continued stalemate. Neutral observers in Germany note that the German people have begun to chafe under wartime restrictions, which extend not merely to food and clothing but even to soap and hot water! Everywhere in Germany there is manifest a keen desire for early peace. With that goes the ill-concealed surprise that, in spite of all their vaunted might, their Nazi masters have not been able to vanquish Britain in two months when they defeated three nations in one. The realization that more sacrifices will be demanded of them in days to come is not serving exactly as a tonic for them. Hitler will have, therefore, to do something to dope his people and do it quick. He cannot rest upon his oars. Every day of suspense will add to his difficulties not only in the Reich but also in the vast occupied territories of Europe.

Hitler has already declared a total blockade of Britain. On the 17th instant the Wilhelmstrasse sent a new note to neutral countries warning them that "Every ship which sails for British waters in the fu-

ture exposes itself to danger and destruction. The whole area is infested with mines. Planes will attack every ship." As if they have not done so all those twelve months since the beginning of war! In fact the Nazi U-boats, mines and planes have taken a bigger toll of Neutral ships than those of the enemies. The grandiloquent declaration of complete blockade only puts on paper what has been followed in practice all along—with precious little effect. The convoys have been coming to British ports regularly loaded with food stuffs, munitions and soldiers, too. The shells from Berthas are certainly not going to stop them. But blockade is at best a negative weapon and for a power like Germany, which has no command of the seas, to talk of its success is an idle boast. It is moreover not suited to the dynamic conception of National Socialism. It is thus inconceivable that Hitler will be content with the blockade. He will have to find quicker and more effective means of ending the stalemate. The only course which is open to him now is to drive to the East.

This has been a cherished ideal of the Germans. The Berlin-Bagdad line was projected even before the last war. But it looks as if this route is no longer available to Hitler, thanks to comrade Stalin. The Nazis are terribly anxious not to allow the oil in the Balkans to go up in smoke, which it is bound to do if a spark falls on the powder magazine. Hitler will have thus to take an alternative route to the East. And the obvious route is via Egypt. In fact the Middle East promises to be the main theatre of war in the near future. The British evacuation of Somaliland has bucked up the Italians no end and they are making intensive preparations for a grand assault on Egypt and the Sudan. It is very likely that the Nazis will take a hand in the campaign. Owing to the fall of France, it is easy for the Germans to pour into Africa and march up to the borders of Egypt. For long there have been rumours of Nazi troops being

massed on the Spanish frontier and one should not be surprised if they are given marching orders very soon.

Britain, however, is fully prepared for all eventualities. The evacuation from Somaliland was voluntary and strategic. The forces embarked from there have already taken their positions on the Egyptian border; reinforcements from the Dominions are being rushed there and the R.A.F. strength is being considerably enhanced. One must await the developments in the Middle East before hazarding any opinion about the future. While there is a feeling of calm confidence about Britain's ability to defend her interests, one must realise that the defection of France has complicated the strategical situation. It is significant that Mr. Churchill, in his masterly speech in the House of Commons, referred to the Middle East situation only at the end and only in passing. This is not because he underrates it but because he realises too well how vital it is. His reticence was perfectly justifiable and he is not the man to halloo before he is out of the woods.

Perhaps the most interesting reference in Mr. Churchill's speech, rhetorically as well as politically, was to Anglo-American relations. He pictured them like the Mississippi rolling along in an ever-growing flood "towards broader lands and better days." It was a sheer stroke of genius to invoke "The Old Man River" (made world-popular by Paul Robeson) in a ministerial balance sheet.

The fact is that owing to the pressure of world forces the two great English-speaking States of the world are coming together as never before in their history. If the help from the United States is vital for Britain's present survival, the very existence of Britain as a great Power is vital to the future free existence of the United States. Mutual interests are bringing them together and the Anglo-American Entente will go down as one of the most decisive events of the year 1940. Visualised against this background

the proposed 99 year lease of certain British islands in the Western Hemisphere appears a logical sequel to the happenings in the last twelve months. The close collaboration of defence between Canada and the United States, the latter's grant of credit to the former in spite of its being a belligerent, the proposal to sell over-age destroyers to Britain—all show how rapidly isolationism is dying down in the United States and how quickly Britain is adjusting herself to events. Will it be "Union Now?"

*September 13, 1940*

Eight days ago Hitler began what has developed into the Battle of London. The first phase of the present Anglo-German war ended when the Nazis found the daylight mass aerial attacks terribly costly and futile. In July and August alone the Luftwaffe lost more than a thousand planes and Goering obviously found to his chagrin that he could not continue the attacks at such a suicidal pace. He, therefore, developed the tactics of lone night time raiding which, while its military effect is negligible, has a considerable nuisance value. It is difficult to intercept a solitary bomber flying at night high up in the clouds and the Nazi pilots have no compunction in releasing their load of bombs wherever they please. A certain amount of destruction is thus inevitable especially in crowded localities.

It is typical of Hitler and his henchmen that during the last eight days they have been concentrating all their savagery upon London with its eight millions of closely packed inhabitants. Ostensibly the bombing is intended for the London dock area, which is a legitimate military objective. But while the docks have sustained a certain amount of damage, the chief victims of the bombers are the residential areas and particularly the East End where the poorer people live. It is officially computed that nearly fifteen hundred

Londoners—men, women and children—have lost their lives during the last week and at least five thousand injured. The damage to property and to utility services, too, has been severe though it has failed to dislocate the normal life of the city or to unnerve the people at large. On the other hand, it has further steeled the determination of every Britisher to destroy the last vestiges of Nazism from the face of the earth.

What does Hitler hope to gain by the present Battle of London, which seems to be gradually increasing in its intensity and fury?—apart, that is, from the satisfaction of his blood lust! The answer is demoralization and dislocation not only of the capital but also of the whole country. There are grounds to believe that the bombing of the East End was deliberately planned. Probably Hitler hoped that by such means he could help the British Fifth Columnists and incite the masses to rise in revolt against their “plutocratic” rulers, as happened in France. In this he has signally failed. On the contrary the present cold-blooded butchery of innocent civilians has sent a wave of anger not only in Britain but also throughout the world, which is bound to recoil upon Hitler’s head ere long.

Again, this night bombing is a double-edged weapon and it is already obvious that numerous places in Germany and Berlin itself are getting a taste of the same medicine. If this continues long enough, the revolt is likely to spread in the Reich rather than in Britain. Hitler probably expects that the British Government out of sheer panic would start a mass evacuation of people from London. The refugees from London would (so runs the Nazi reasoning) help to spread demoralization and dislocation throughout Britain as happened in France. Such an eventuality would provide a golden opportunity for a successful invasion. Here again Hitler will be soon disillusioned. The evacuation of thousands of children from the London area was accomplished more than a year ago imme-

diately on the outbreak of the war. The adults who remain are prepared to see it through with the typical British doggedness. Neither they nor the British Government will oblige Hitler by starting a stampede into the country.

The casualties after all are infinitesimal viewed against the vast background of the world war. The damage to property also is far from catastrophic. When we remember how the heroic people of Barcelona stood to Franco's bombing month after month though they had not even one-hundredth of the defensive and offensive weapons which London has, one need not be at all pessimistic about the future of the latter city. It is indeed a vain hope to be able to defeat Britain by destroying London.

Whether he gains or loses the Battle of London, however, Hitler is bound to proceed apace with his plan of invasion. He cannot tarry and hesitate any longer for the simple reason that he is running a race against time. It seems from his latest feverish activities that he has realised this too well. His supreme confidence about his ability to smash Britain whenever he wanted, to which he gave expression after the fall of France, has perceptibly disappeared. The breathing space which he allowed Britain in June and July really threatens to prove fatal to his own interests. While every day is adding to his responsibilities and difficulties, it is making Britain stronger in arm and more resolute in mind.

Mr. Churchill referred in his broadcast to the intensive preparations that the Nazis are making for a grand assault on Britain. The entire European coast is a hive of ceaseless activity and large concentrations of E-boats, self-propelled barges and flat-bottomed craft are assembling in the Channel ports. A report says that the main attack will come from Norway where practice at landings is being conducted daily along the coast and across the Skager Rak. I have already discussed in detail the Banse Plan, which the

Nazis are expected to follow in their invasion. But while the main blow will be delivered on the South-East of Britain, a number of feints will be practised all over England, Scotland and even Eire to distract attention and divide the defending forces.

Fortunately the whole of Britain is at present a huge garrison and there have never been more cosmopolitan armies than those which are assembled on British soil at present. Apart from units of every country in the British Commonwealth, there are independent French, Czechoslovakian, Polish, Norwegian and Dutch battalions ready to defend Britain and with Britain the freedom of their own nations. It goes without saying that ultimately the fate of the invasion will be decided in the air. Possibly Hitler expects his E-boats and barges to play the part which his tanks played in France, the main responsibility of their safe passage and landing of troops devolving upon the bombers overhead. There are again the Big Berthas installed on the French coast to keep the Channel free from the Royal Navy. They have already had a preliminary trial, though they have so far achieved nothing spectacular.

What are the prospects of such an invasion? Hitler has by luck and pluck brought off so many brilliant coups during the last decade that he may trust his stars to be successful in this one too. But the probabilities are all against him and he has lost even those chances which he had three months ago. This does not mean that no German troops will succeed in landing upon British soil. Isolated landings are certainly possible both via the sea and the air. The autumn fogs will be useful as a screen for convoying barges as well as carrying troopships. It may be pointed out here that the attack on Paris, too, was conducted under the cover of an impenetrable artificial fog.

But isolated landings of troops, whatever damage they may succeed in doing for a time, do not techni-

cally amount to an invasion. At best they may be called a strategic and even a vital penetration. Such penetrations did help the Nazis in Holland and Norway but Britain is neither the one nor the other. It is a fortress whose every rampart is manned and self-contained to meet the invader. Hitler may be trusted to use every weapon, sinister or secret including poison gas (which he has so far somehow refrained from using), to demoralise, destroy and defeat the British, who have had the cheek to ignore his "Last Appeal To Reason." And there is no denying the fact that a grim trial awaits every man, woman and child in Britain.

September 20, 1940

While the long-threatened Nazi invasion of Britain is being deferred day after day, London seems to be settling down to the indiscriminate, inhuman and practically non-stop bombing.

It will be now more than two weeks that Hitler switched over his tactics from daylight mass attacks to the raiding by lone bombers at night. During this period London has undoubtedly received a number of hard knocks. Practically all areas of London, including Westminster and Buckingham Palace, have received their share of more or less severe damage.

But the metropolis is standing up magnificently to the ceaseless aerial holocaust. From the East End Cockney to the West End Smart Set, from the Commoner to the King—all are sharing similar hazards and all are behaving with exceptional courage and even coolness. Neutral correspondents are vying with each other in paying tributes to the morale of the Londoners and the *St. Louis Post Despatch* (U.S.A.) was not exaggerating when it observed recently that England is producing heroes on a mass production scale. Numerous cases of matchless courage and unparalleled self-sacrifice are being cited daily. The heroes and

heroines of those exploits are mostly common men and women like you and me and their bravery and nobility are the only redeeming features of the present senseless massacre.

London will go down in history like Madrid, Barcelona and Warsaw, which, too, braved the wrath of Hitler's bombers and whose spirit survived all the ruin and arson wrought upon them. The Battle of London is yet waxing fast and furious and, thanks to the new terrific gun-barrage, the German raiders are finding it more and more difficult to penetrate the defences. But while this has its advantages, the German pilots are in sheer fury releasing their load of bombs wherever they may be, without even attempting to locate military objectives, before scampering back home. This is the reason why, though the defences are daily becoming closer and stronger, the destruction of property and loss of life yet shows no sign of abating.

We must see facts in the proper perspective. Those who know the British character realise too well that those terroristic, gun-man's methods are not going to make that nation throw up its arms in surrender. Hitler is very much mistaken if he believes that he can defeat Britain merely by reducing London to a shambles, as he succeeded in doing in Poland and Holland. Not only is he jibbing at the long-heralded invasion but he seems even to have given up the pretence of bombing military objectives. Britain's factories are piling up armaments and ammunitions day after day and hour after hour. These war efforts are going on without any serious molestation from the Luftwaffe and the workers are gradually learning to ignore even the sirens, those "wailing banshees" in Churchill's picturesque phrase. The sirens are henceforth to be recognised as the alert, and not the alarm, signal and this trifling fact in itself is a significant pointer to the grim determination to see it through, which pervades the British people to-day.

But while the Londoners are doing their best in stemming the Hitlerian tide, the main credit of upsetting the Nazi calendar goes to the gallant men of the Royal Air Force. It is they who have made Hitler's invasion, which was originally scheduled for August 15, so far abortive. It is they who have clipped the wings of the Luftwaffe and taken the conceit out of Marshal Goering. Above all it is they who have been seriously crippling the Reich's war preparations. Night after night for the last three months ever since the tragic fall of France, they have roamed at large over Germany and the German-occupied territories of Europe and inflicted severe damage upon plants, factories and arsenals.

Particularly during the last few weeks, as the prospects of invasion began to appear more and more imminent, the R.A.F. has been delivering hammer blows at the entire European coast. Those blows are daily increasing in intensity and the Channel Ports at any rate have been reduced to one mass of ruins. Dunkirk, Calais, Ostend, Le Havre, Boulogne—all are being daily visited by British bombers and no wonder Hitler is finding it impossible to assemble the shipping necessary to invade Britain.

The German Radio has naturally made light of those attacks but more and more evidence continues to accumulate regarding the havoc wrought by British bombing. The latest report says that no foreign correspondent will be allowed any longer to visit the damaged sites and considering that so long regular officially conducted tours used to take place immediately a raid occurred, the present departure seems to be very significant.

Again cafes, restaurants and other places of public entertainment are now ordered to be closed at 11 p.m. instead of the customary 1 a.m. Berliners especially are advised to seek the maximum sleep between the hours of 6 and 12 so as to be ready for the bombers' visits afterwards. Blackouts are becoming

stricter and stricter throughout Germany. When we remember that it was Goering's boast that no British planes would be allowed to cast their shadows over Germany, we cannot miss the meaning of the new precautions. The biggest testimony to the striking power of the R.A.F., of course, comes from the fact that the invasion itself is being postponed *sine die*.

While the Italian armies in Libya are cautiously feeling their way beyond the border and have as a matter of fact made a tentative advance in the No Man's Land bordering Egyptian territory, Mussolini's long-promised full-blooded offensive against Egypt has not yet materialised. So far the British army has been purposely on the defensive and adopting guerilla tactics, it has been constantly and considerably harassing the advance Italian columns. Those columns have been obliged to hug the coast and have thus proved excellent targets for the Royal Navy, which has frequently shelled and destroyed enemy concentrations at Sidi Barrani and on the road to Sollum.

But why is Mussolini playing a waiting game, especially when he knows thoroughly well that time is not on his side? Whatever preparations he had to make "to boot out" the British from North Africa were made long ago. Every week is adding to the strength of the armies under General Wavell and, according to Italian estimates, there are 230,000 British troops massed in North Africa at present. While this estimate appears to be an obvious exaggeration, it at any rate reveals the salutary dread which the Fascist Commander entertains for Britain. Mussolini's unwillingness to join a decisive battle may be attributed to two considerations. First, that he is awaiting the outcome of the projected Nazi invasion of Britain and second, that he does not feel sufficiently strong to launch an offensive by himself and that he is demanding the help of Nazi battalions. The present suspense in the Middle East is due to those two facts neither of which is complimentary to the Duce.

## IV

# DAVID AGAINST GOLIATH

*We are struggling not only for existence, but for the cause of other Balkan peoples. We are struggling for ideals whose import goes beyond our frontiers and extends to all mankind.*

—General Metaxas

*October 11, 1940*

| T is evident that Hitler's time-table has gone wrong. He ought to have finished with Britain and set the Nazi seal on the future destinies of Europe long before. Instead, his legions are merely marking time on the channel ports while the German people are facing the privations and cold of another dread winter!

The Brenner meeting with his fellow-dictator, the Tripartite Pact with Japan (those who have read *Mein Kampf* know his contempt for the Japanese along with all other coloured people), the virtual occupation of Rumania by the Panzer Korps,—all provide unmistakable evidence of the straits to which the Fuehrer is reduced at present.

He is obviously and furiously busy revising his time-table, though all indications point to the fact that he is not finding it an easy job. Slowly, imperceptibly but surely, he seems to be losing his initiative, his grip on the march of events.

What is Hitler's next plan likely to be?

To begin with, the invasion of Britain may well be written off now. This does not mean that the threat will not be there. It will certainly remain until the last gun is fired in the present war. It has an immense tactical value for Hitler. As long as the danger of invasion lasts, the flower of the British Army, Navy and the R.A.F. will remain immobilised in and around Britain. Nor can Britain relax in the slightest

degree her precautions and preparations to defend the heart of the Commonwealth.

Such a development naturally suits Hitler's plan. For this in effect means that he may attempt to force the decision elsewhere without fearing the opposition of the most seasoned of Britain's fighting forces. It is really a strategic gain of the first order, whose significance will become apparent when real fighting comes off either in the Middle or Far East. Japan also will profit by the present situation as the major part of the Royal Navy will have to remain confined to English waters.

Viewed in this light, one almost feels that it would have been actually far better for Britain if Hitler had done up with his invasion stunt once for all. Now the soldiers, sailors and airmen will have to remain always on the *qui vive* through the long hours of winter without ever meeting their foe face to face. The situation, indeed, reminds one of the huge French armies garrisoning the Maginot Line last year, though there is a world of difference between the two armies as far as morale—the will to conquer—is concerned.

We must, therefore, look out for probable developments elsewhere. The most likely field seems to be the Middle East, where the armies of General Wavell and Marshal Graziani are facing each other for months now. The former is strictly on the defensive and will remain so for a pretty long time to come. The latter, after making a tentative advance through the Libyan desert, has halted his troops at Sidi Barrani and is probably waiting for further orders from the Duce and, possibly, further reinforcements from the Fuehrer.

The ability of the Nazis to support the Fascists in Africa partly depends upon the attitude of Spain. They are not fools to rush their regiments to the hot and inhospitable shores of Africa without having a safe line of communication. That line obviously lies

athwart the Iberian Peninsula and having no navy of their own to transport troops and supplies, the Nazis are for the last few months assiduously wooing, cajoling and alternately threatening the Falangist rulers of Spain to throw in their lot with the Nazis. General Franco, however, seems to have proved a hard nut to crack. Non-belligerency *vis-a-vis* Britain is the farthest he is prepared to go and the spectacle of the failure of the contemplated invasion of Britain is apparently having a more potent influence upon him than all the blandishments offered by the two Dictators.

October 18, 1940

The most important event during the last week has undoubtedly been the opening of the Burma Road. In itself the decision of the British Government not to renew the understanding with Japan is of a negative character. It merely restores the *status quo*. But its reactions are bound to be very positive and very far-reaching. It represents the end of the appeasement policy followed by Britain in the Far East for almost a decade now.

The landslide which began with Manchukuo has been at last halted on the Burma-Yunnan Road. The blunder that was begun by Sir John Simon, when Britain was at the peak of her power and prestige at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, has at last been rectified by Mr. Winston Churchill when Britain is facing the challenge to her very existence at the opening of the fourth. It may well be called a Decade of Disillusionment!

The opening of the Burma Road will not mark for Britain merely the end of the old order in the Far East but also the firm beginning of the new, in collaboration with the United States of America. It is hinted that the Governor of Hongkong may

soon rescind the order of the closure of the Hongkong highway to China. Canada has already banned the export of copper to Japan following the example of her neighbour. It is further expected that India will follow suit by prohibiting the export of scrap-iron.

What will be the reactions of Japan to this sudden tightening of the economic strings? Will the latter succeed in checking her career of barefaced aggression or will it further incite her to rush headlong into the arms of its Axis partners and to provoke an immediate crisis? This development must have been anticipated by the Japanese government and people. Whatever they are, they do not lack hardheaded realism and they realise by now that the Three Power Pact has not proved an undiluted success.

The Tokyo warlords have certainly not delayed in declaring their decision to bomb the Chinese side of the Burma Road without any loss of time. Thanks to the betrayal of Indo-China by the Vichy Government they are in a position to endanger the use of the Burma Road as also the safety of Kunming, the capital of Yunnan. The nearest aerodrome on the Indo-Chinese border is at a distance of barely 250 miles and the Japanese are thus in a position to keep a constant barrage of bombs on the transport. Again, the Hongkong highway is practically of no commercial use as the Eastern Gibraltar is itself a beleagured fortress and its line of communication with China is entirely in Japanese hands. Howsoever small might be the actual advantage of the opening of the route, it nevertheless indicates a new orientation of Sino-British relations.

There are reasons to believe that the Japanese bark will probably prove worse than the Japanese bite. Whatever damage they may inflict upon the caravans that have already begun to move on the 700 mile road, the Japanese bombers will not succeed in closing the road altogether. It may be remembered

that the Canton-Hankow railway line was kept running for a very long time in spite of the constant aerial attacks during the first year of the "incident". One may thus be assured that vital if not substantial supplies will now start reaching General Chiang Kai-Shek through the Burma-Yunnan artery.

This is, however, the least part of the story. The most important issue is whether Japan will cry halt to her war-mongering or whether egged by her European friends she will go the whole hog and end in open hostilities with Britain or/and the United States. Nippon's first reactions at any rate have been more discreet than valorous. It has in fact tried to explain away the Tripartite Pact altogether and generally to put the soft pedal on her friendship with the Nazis and Fascists. This unexpected denouement has in fact infuriated von Ribbentrop, whose Far East calculations are in the danger of misfiring if the new tendencies gain momentum in Tokyo.

It must be remembered that Japan is already stuck up to her neck in the Chinese "incident". The undeclared war is now dragging on into its fourth year and yet the annihilation of the Chiang Kai-Shek regime is nowhere in sight. Four years of intensive fighting have already drained Japan heavily both in men and materials and whatever the bravado of her Jingo rulers, she cannot afford lightly to add to her foes. Besides she is mostly at the mercy of her potential enemies for the supply of the raw materials which keep her military and industrial machinery going. The embargo put by the United States and Canada on the dispatch of oil, iron, aluminium, copper, nickel and other vital goods will soon cripple her badly.

Japan's air force, for example, is dependent to a very large extent on the shipment of oil from America. Economically Japan is a most vulnerable country and in the event of hostilities with Great Britain and the United States her imports would dry up in no

time. Her new allies in Europe are not in a position to help her in any way, the Italian navy being bottled up in the Mediterranean while the German navy is practically non-existent. No wonder Japan seems "terribly scared".

This does not mean, however, that she will beat a definite retreat from her new position, howsoever perilous it may be proving for the time being or that she will hurriedly jettison the Three Power Pact. Her statesmen are seasoned diplomats and they will yet find means to extricate themselves from their present difficulties. Their trump-card in this connection is, believe it or not, Soviet Russia! They are furiously busy wooing their traditional enemy and already there are thick rumours in various capitals that a non-aggression pact between Japan and Russia is a distinct and immediate possibility!

Such an eventuality need not surprise anybody who has followed the tortuous foreign policy of Stalin. His ambassador in Washington is at present engaged in conversations with the American authorities for a rapprochement between the two countries and the recent trade agreement represents a change for the better in American—Soviet relations. History is thus in a sense repeating itself and I for one would not wonder if Stalin throws another bombshell in the shape of a Japanese-Soviet Pact on the lines of his historic agreement with Germany in August 1939. That pact was quickly followed by the European war and there is every likelihood of the expected understanding with Japan leading to a war in the Far East.

While Hitler is consolidating his position in Rumania, all the Balkan countries are feeling extremely apprehensive about the future. The fear, indeed, extends as far as Iran and Iraq, as is illustrated by the former country starting "large-scale manoeuvres of an unprecedented character" which the Shah himself is said to be personally directing.

October 25, 1940.

Hitler's sudden departure to the Franco-Spanish frontier to visit Franco—both the Fuehrer and the Caudillo were accompanied by their respective General Staffs—and the subsequent meeting between Hitler and Marshal Petain seem to indicate some big developments in the near future. Franco appears unmistakably in for it, though diplomatic circles in Washington still persist in believing that he will not enter the war on the Axis side. True, Franco has long been playing a very cautious game and so far he has not allowed himself to crack under the joint pressure of Rome and Berlin. But the dice have been very heavily loaded against him from the very beginning. His regime itself owes its existence to the help of his Fascist and Nazi friends and he is obviously not in a position to defy their wishes, howsoever long he may succeed in deferring their execution. The Falange is a house divided against itself. Thanks to the patronage extended to him by the Nazis, the sinister influence of Senor Suner, the brother-in-law of the Caudillo, is gradually growing in the party and his recent promotion to the Foreign Ministership is symptomatic of the prevailing feeling amongst the Falangist rank and file.

More interesting than Gen. Franco's is the case of Marshal Petain. The unexpected and sudden visit of the "Fuehrer" of (non-occupied) France to his German prototype has led to a crop of rumours, conjectures and alarmist reports. This meeting between the victor and the vanquished coming on the heels of the talks between von Ribbentrop and M. Laval, the evil genius behind the figurehead Field-Marshal, has many disquieting features about it and the question is being openly asked whether it does not presage a declaration of war against Britain by the Vichy Government.

Hostilities between those two erstwhile Allies will naturally be one of the most tragic events of history.

But such a denouement does not, unfortunately, appear so fantastically impossible now as it might have done four months ago after the fall of France. In the first place the "soldier's peace" which Petain sought has proved to be nothing short of servility. The division of the country between occupied and unoccupied France has itself made the Nazis' task of exploitation very easy. Correspondingly it has added to the difficulties of the rulers of Vichy who find themselves at every turn at the mercy of the German authorities.

The rehabilitation even of unoccupied France has hardly begun as yet. Trade and industry are at a standstill and famine stares the people in the face. The problem of refugees remains unsolved still and tens of thousands of demobbed soldiers are roaming over the land aimlessly. Over and above all those hardships and difficulties stands the character of those who rule occupied France at present. They have already murdered the Third Republic and promulgated a totalitarian order for France. In every way possible they are cheaply imitating the Nazis and their fawning has gone to the length of Jew-baiting. Most of the men of Vichy are pronounced Anglophobes and left to themselves they would have no compunction in declaring war on their ex-Ally.

Perhaps more important than the actual declaration of war by France will be the attitude adopted by M. Petain towards the Axis demands regarding the French fleet and air force and the Colonies. It is rumoured that Hitler in his anxiety to end the war as early as possible is ready to risk a final showdown with Britain not only in the air but also on the sea. He is therefore wooing the octogenarian Marshal to "lease" him the French fleet and air force in order to launch a decisive land, naval and aerial offensive on all fronts. Howsoever pliant the Vichy Government may be in France itself, they have so far managed to keep the integrity of their colonies intact on the whole. This vigilance is naturally dictated by the fear that

complete subservience towards the Nazis will only lead to a revolt among the people of the colonies and that they will thus play into the hands of General de Gaulle. The dispatch of General Weygand to Africa and the frequent tours of inspection he is undertaking in the French territories reveal the uneasiness of the Vichy Government. The situation in Syria, which is a mandated territory and not a colony, is again very critical while the attempt made by a subaltern on the life of the Governor reveals the depth of feeling in Indo-China.

That outpost of France has been as good as surrendered to the Far-Eastern partner of the Axis and the fear now is whether the same fate awaits Syria and the French colonies in Africa. While Syria lies on the Nazi way to the Middle East, the French ports on the Atlantic seaboard of Africa will be immensely helpful to the Germans as bases for their submarines. This will be a threat not only to Britain but also to America. How far will the betrayers of free France go in the appeasement of their conquerors?—That is the question on everybody's lips today. While the action which Britain will be constrained to take in the worst eventuality can be easily foreseen, the reaction of the United States is perhaps more interesting. Plans are said to be chalked out for the occupation of the French territories in the Caribbean Sea should such a step be deemed necessary for the defence of the Western Hemisphere.

*November 1, 1940*

What did Hitler tell General Franco when he visited the latter on the Franco-Spanish border? What did Hitler tell Marshal Pétain when he gave him an audience somewhere in occupied France? What did Hitler tell Mussolini when they met at Florence? And, lastly, what is Hitler telling—Hitler?

These are the questions which are intriguing diplomats and journalists since the German Dictator started his amazing peregrinations. The Fuehrer is not the person to run from pillar to post. He has perfected the art of sending for a man and putting him on the mat. Schuschnigg, Hacha and even Chamberlain know the Hitlerian technique of bluff and blackmail too well.

Why is Hitler then, who had not stepped on non-German soil before he became the Dictator, running hat in hand from one country to another? And what is the dope he is dispensing to his would-be victims? There are grounds to believe that he is keeping his own counsel and that even his Axis colleague is completely in the dark regarding the moves of his senior partner. Particularly Hitler's unilateral attempts to "appease" Petain seem to have considerably piqued Mussolini, not merely because he is afraid that his jackal's prize in the shape of French colonies will slip from his hands but also and more because he fears that the incorporation of even a defeated France into the Axis will reduce the importance of Italy in the New Totalitarian Europe. He has evidently become deeply suspicious of the victor's wooing of the vanquished and the Rome Press is stridently emphasising the Fascist firmness in exacting its pound of flesh from a prostrate France. There might be honour among thieves but this maxim certainly does not apply to political gangsters as the Duce knows very well. Hitler is well-known as a past master in double-crossing and bamboozling. While, therefore, one must not attach any excessive importance to the reported rift in the Axis lute, it certainly provides an amusing interlude in the midst of the present European hostilities.

Hitler has never been parsimonious in his promises though their gilding has considerably suffered during the last few years. It is perfectly possible,

therefore, that during his talks with Petain, he has been lavish in his words in order to cajole the Vichy Leader into handing over the French fleet and bases on the North African seaboard. He must have also assured Petain that the exactions of Italy would be considerably softened if France accepts the dominant role of Germany in the new Europe that will be born after the Axis victory.

Last weekend it was widely believed that Petain had either succumbed to the blandishments of or been browbeaten into surrender by the Nazi Chancellor. But since then no confirmation is available of those reports; on the other hand the Vichy Ambassador to Washington, M. Haye, has categorically denied that any cession of territory or separate peace with Germany was contemplated.

This is surprise No. 1 of the last week. Far from Marshal Petain playing the role of a craven penitent at the Nazi shrine, he emphasised in his broadcast from the Lyons Radio on Wednesday that "while accepting the principle of collaboration with Germany, France remains sovereign still." Taken by itself this statement is meaningless unless and until we get an inkling into the conversation between the German Fuehrer and his pale French copy. The most significant pointer in this connection is provided by the hint dropped in London not to take too desperate a view of the situation in France. The earlier concern in Washington, too, seems to be considerably alleviated.

This is not to say that there need be no more anxiety about the attitude of Vichy particularly regarding the future of the French fleet. It represents a considerable striking force even now and were it seized by Hitler, it would be indeed ominous for Britain. Similar is the case with the occupation of French ports in Africa. But the very hesitation of the men of Vichy to go the whole hog with their Nazi mentors is a welcome sign.

The next surprise of the last week is not the wanton invasion of Greece by Italy but the way that invasion is developing—or not!

Why do I say so? Because, in the first place, the attack has been anticipated for months now. Not only that but Mussolini has his eye upon some of the strategically important Greek islands for a number of years. If Hitler has made mincemeat of half a dozen nations, Mussolini can at least put his foot on the neck of his neighbour. Otherwise he would lose face in the eyes of his Blackshirts. Besides, the Middle East campaign of Marshal Graziani is hardly developing in a very satisfactory manner for the Duce. On the other hand the forces under General Wavell are rapidly expanding and consolidating their positions. In view of the British guarantee for the integrity of Greece, the Duce must have thought it worth-while to tempt some of the British divisions further on.

A bigger surprise is provided by the decision of Greece to take up arms against the aggressor. The Greek fighting forces are no match for the Fascist legions, even if we keep out of account the 70 Nazi divisions which are reported to be massed in the Balkans. General Metaxas, who is ruling Greece with an iron hand since 1936, is a pronounced Germanophil since his very student days in the Berlin Military Academy in the eighties. His opposition to Greece joining the Allies in the first World War led to a long exile. When a man of such antecedents stands up against the Axis, in spite of the fate of Poland, Holland, Norway and France—well, it is a capital surprise, almost a miracle!

But the chapter does not close here. For it is reported that Italy's latest adventure was undertaken without the previous sanction of Hitler and that the latter, therefore, looks askance at it. Not only that but he is said to be anxious to win Greece over to the Axis by a dose of appeasement *a la Pétain* rather than by Blitzkrieg pressure. Whether any credence can

be attached to this report is difficult to find out. At any rate it is true, though strange, that the Italians have not much to show for five days fighting. David is gallantly standing to Goliath and the surprise seems to be rather on Mussolini's side than that of Metaxas. Everybody feared that Greece might collapse at the first onslaught but so far she has stood her ground magnificently.

*November 8, 1940*

The biggest event of the last week is not directly related to the war but its repercussions on the future developments of hostilities are bound to be of a decisive character.

I am of course referring to the re-election of President Roosevelt. He has achieved what none of his predecessors ever hoped for. The bias against a third term for the Chief Executive of the United States is deep-rooted in the American mind. The convention set by George Washington himself is so strongly crystallised that its break would have been viewed with horror barely a year ago. It would have been condemned as an outrage on democracy itself!

Franklin Delano Roosevelt has been elected for a third term and a consecutive third term at that. How came it to pass that public opinion should swing over so suddenly and so completely as to defy a most sacrosanct though unwritten feature of the American constitution? There is the magnetic charm of the President. There is the great popularity of the First Lady in the U.S.A., the irresistible Eleanor, to supplement it. There is the wide appeal of the New Deal for the toiling masses. And one must not forget that behind the electioneering campaign of Roosevelt stood the sanction of the entire administration, the public servants in the United States not being barred from active politics as in Britain.

All these were no doubt very favourable factors for the third term platform. But what clinched the issue was something not directly connected with American life. It was the war in Europe which won for Roosevelt the White House Stakes for the third time in succession. This sounds like a paradox, which is paralleled only by the other one that the American election will have a decisive reaction upon the European conflagration. And that is why not merely the United States but the whole world from China to Peru was so intensely interested in the Democratic-Republican fight. Mr. Willkie, too, is thoroughly pro-British and he had more than once emphasised his fixed determination to help them to the maximum possible capacity of his country. But still most observers in the Democratic nations hoped for a Roosevelt victory.

As some one aptly remarked:—The President with all his known vices was preferable to an opponent with unknown virtues. The foreign policy so far followed by Roosevelt has been pretty clear and pretty emphatic. While his actions have been marked with sobriety, statesmanship and a legal regard for his country's neutrality, he has never disguised his sympathies for the Democracies, never minced words while castigating the outrages of the Dictators. His classic condemnation of Mussolini's declaration of war on June 10—"plunging the dagger into the back of his neighbour"—is an instance in point.

But all those months hung above him the Damocles' Sword of the election. It was the last year of his regime and he could not afford to strike out new lines of policy which his successor may not support, may even oppose. Then there was the Congress with its historical prejudice against the President's authority to consider. Nor could Roosevelt forget that his predecessor in office in the last Great War died of a broken heart, all his work for world peace undone

by his own Congress. The shadow of Woodrow Wilson loomed large on the White House.

In spite of all his thundering denunciations, therefore, Roosevelt had to walk warily and feel his way very cautiously around him. He had to assure friends and convince his foes that he was not dragging America into war while extending American help to the Allies. He was hampered, almost hamstrung, at every turn. That is why on that fateful 15th of June, 1940, when Premier Reynaud sent his last S.O.S. across the seas, Roosevelt could do nothing more than promise to do his level best to help France. It was a poignant day in the annals of the Third Republic and equally poignant must it have been in the life of Roosevelt. If America had stretched its hand of comradeship to its former ally, probably France would have been saved. But Roosevelt was helpless. He could not commit his country to another war. He had to consider November 5!

And now November 5 has come and gone and Roosevelt is not merely safe in his saddle but has added power to his elbow. He can shape the destinies of the United States—and may be of the world—for four more complete years. Now he has got a more amenable Congress behind him and what is more, the suffrage of the people. His foreign policy has received the imprimatur of the electorate and he can go forward with faith in his heart and firmness in his steps. No longer need he vacillate, temporise or look before and after.

The biggest question mark before the world now is, therefore, whether America will join the war. With the reelection of Roosevelt the issue has been removed from the realm of possibility into the field of probability. True it is that the President has more than once given the solemn assurance that he will keep America out of the War. And there is no reason to suggest that he was being hypocritical in making such an affirmation. But, to a realist, the problem is now

not so much whether America will remain out of the war, but whether the war will remain out of America! The Axis Powers are under no delusion as to the meaning of Roosevelt's success. So far they have refrained from rubbing Americans the wrong way with an eye on the future. American journalists were treated with exaggerated courtesy and tact both in Berlin and Rome. Hitler more than once scouted the idea that he has any designs in the New World. Provided the Old World was left to him, he was more than ready to leave the New World to live in peace.

But the presidential election has put a new complexion on Axis-American relations. America is under the new dispensation merely (and avowedly) non-belligerent, not neutral. It is committed to extending every possible aid to Britain. There is in fact going to be a pooling of technical, industrial and even scientific resources between the two Democracies. There has been a barter of destroyers with strategic bases and an air squadron of American volunteers is at present on active service in British skies.

Why should the Dictators, then, who have never been over-scrupulous in their treatment of neutral nations, bother any longer to be meticulous in their relations with a self-confessed non-neutral? Why should they see with open eyes more and more American aid being made available to Britain? Why should they even allow safe passage for peregrinating Yankees, who have no business to be in Europe anyway?

Turning from the New World to the Old, the Italo-Greek front is much in the same position as it was last week. That is to say, Mussolini has made no advance in Greece and Hitler has not made up his mind whether to advance into Greece. The Greeks on their part are not merely showing a gallant resistance but have actually wrested the offensive from the Fascists. Meanwhile Britain is making available all possible help to its new Ally and while the Royal Navy is dominating the Aegean Sea, advance units of

the R.A.F. are establishing bases in Crete and elsewhere. Detachments of the British Army are also reported to have landed in Greece.

Of these expeditionary units, the R.A.F. is naturally proving the most active and the most destructive. So long Italy was comparatively immune from the attention of the British bombers. But with the wanton attack on Greece, Italy has presented Britain with capital aerodromes from which British bombers can strike into the heart of Italy. Already Naples, Brindisi and other Italian ports have suffered considerable damage and the havoc will soon spread to other strategic centres too.

*November 15, 1940*

The visit of M. Molotov to Berlin during the last week appears a major diplomatic triumph for the Nazis even though it might not have proved "the sensation of the world", as the German Radio grandiloquently announced on the eve of the Soviet Foreign Minister's departure from Moscow.

What prevailed upon the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the People's Commissar of Defence and His Kremlin Master's Voice to undertake this journey at the present juncture? Was it merely a return courtesy call, which von Ribbentrop, the Nazi Foreign Minister, has been suppliantly pressing upon his Moscow opposite to pay for many months now? Was it a mere window-dressing to hide the strained relations which are reported to have lately arisen between Russia and Germany as a result of the latter's virtual occupation of Rumania? Or is it meant as a totalitarian reply to the re-election of President Roosevelt: Nazi-Soviet collaboration as a counterbalance to Anglo-American cohesion?

There have been no official communiques on the Hitler-Molotov talks at either end and their absence is

extremely significant. Unofficial quarters in Berlin suggest that there will be no immediate results following the visit—at any rate for publication. Which at least does sound like a surprise if not an anti-climax!

Why should the Nazis have been so solicitous in bringing M. Molotov to Berlin? They might have triumphantly shown him off to the world but they have also in that process given out their hand. This renewed wooing of the Soviet is virtually a confession that the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis is finding itself in a blind alley and that unless they know for certain which way the Soviet cat is going to jump, they are not going to embroil themselves in any further adventures either in the Near or Far East.

As I view them, Hitler's points of persuasion may be summarised as follows in a descending order:

(a) A regular military pact between the Soviet and Germany. Much of the gilt has long since worn off the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact which fell like a bombshell upon the world in August 1939 and it remains a poor consolation for Hitler in his present state. Now the Fuehrer is anxious to drive a full-blooded defensive-offensive bargain with Stalin and has accordingly proposed (in the typical Hitler tradition) a partition of the world between the two. While this delightful division may merely amuse the world, it is very likely to have annoyed the two other Axis partners, who are fobbed off with the leavings from the table.

Obviously it was beyond Molotov's instrument of instructions to sign any such pact. And the very fact that a brief but ostentatious communiqué was issued in Moscow emphasising the Soviet's strict neutrality in the present conflict, at the very time when Molotov was packing his trunks, provides a pointer to Stalin's mind. Again while General Keitel and the other Nazi warlords were very much present in the various receptions arranged in the distinguished guest's honour, the suite of thirty-two which accompanied M. Molotov

was conspicuous by the absence of any military men. Surely it could not have been only an accidental omission.

(b) Failing a military pact, Hitler must have banked upon gaining Russia's active aid to the Three-Power Alliance recently consummated between Germany, Italy and Japan. This Tripartite Pact can hardly be said to be functioning to the Nazis' satisfaction and Hitler undoubtedly wants to ginger it up by obtaining the Soviet's blessings thereto. But the wary Stalin is not likely to commit himself to any positive line of action in advance. Now it is his turn to see which way the Axis cat might jump next—especially in the Far East. Though he has shown himself not to be quite averse to take a hand in the Totalitarian grab for world domination, he is not prepared to bring down a major war upon his head in that act. While therefore he may remain remotely benevolent to the smash-and-grab tactics of the Triple Axis, he won't probably consent to be styled their sleeping partner or patron saint either.

(c) Failing the above two major objectives, the third point on Hitler's card must have been to urge upon M. Molotov to sign a non-aggression pact with Japan on the lines of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. This would in the first place release Japan for her contemplated "incidents" in Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies and in the second, demonstrate to the world the Soviet's sympathy if not solidarity with the Axis. Even such a pact will constitute no mean diplomatic gain for Hitler and recent straws in the wind indicate it to be a distinct possibility in the near future in spite of the traditional Russo-Japanese enmity. Apart from the fact that Stalin is bent upon preserving peace what time he brings the Soviet war machine to the highest pitch of efficiency, Japan also has recently revised her attitude *vis-a-vis* Russia.

The *Times* Tokyo correspondent drew pointed attention to this a few days ago. Concessions, which

would have been formerly considered incredible, are being openly discussed by Japanese publicists and appeasement of Russia is presented as a logical conclusion of the signing of the Tripartite Pact! This metamorphosis (it is nothing less) of Japanese foreign policy is an event of great importance in the East and it may have far-reaching consequences in the near future. There is only one little fly in the Russo-Japanese ointment—China.

Last—and least—among Hitler's aims must have been the necessity of implementing the provisions of the 1939 Pact as far as they concern trade. So far, partly due to the inherent difficulties and partly owing to not-so-inherent tactics adopted by the Kremlin, Hitler has profited precious little even in the limited economic sphere. The supplies of raw materials from Russia have been meagre. The import of commodities useful for the prosecution of war have been well-nigh negligible. There is said to have been a failure of crops last season and Russia herself is facing a famine to spare any foodstuffs for Germany. Soviet factories are working double-shifts to produce war materials and machines for the Red Army. And above all are the long distances to be travelled and the notoriously poor conditions of the Russian railways.

I have so far discussed M. Molotov's visit from the Nazi angle. What is the Soviet view likely to be in this connection? Moscow must have been amused by the frenzy in Berlin and mystery in other capitals created by M. Molotov's journey. Why should not its Foreign Minister pay a call—and that, too, a return call—to a friendly nation? Why should the world read sinister plots in a courtesy visit. At least the Kremlin can claim for itself the virtue of consistency—since August 1939! So far they have hit off nicely with the Nazis, even though the Fuehrer might be bestriding over the Black Sea at present. Why displease Hitler, especially when he is so desperately ready to be pleased with so very little?

Those who are angry with Stalin for hobnobbing with Hitler must realise that the present is not Stalin's war. It might be *demode* for democratic diplomats to visit Berlin now, but the Soviet has always maintained its own independent code. Besides there is as much good reason for Stalin to remain in the good books of Hitler as *vice versa*. He wants to keep the German armies, for which he seems to have developed a justifiable dread, as far away from Russian borders as possible. And above all there is the deeprooted obsession that at any moment the capitalist-Fascist countries of Europe may compose their own quarrel and march into Russia to exterminate the godless Bolshies!

This no doubt sounds fantastic in November 1940 but no honest student of European history can deny that that was the aim of many a myopic, class-ridden statesman in Europe for twenty years since 1919. They wanted the Nazis and the Bolshies to destroy each other while they were battenning themselves! Now the boot is on the other leg and Stalin has good reason to allow his own declared adversaries to fight it out among themselves. He is in fact out to enjoy the grim joke as long as possible and it is not in his interest that the conflict should end speedily. The longer, the better for him and the worse for everybody else!

This is a hardheaded, cynical, realistic and even brutal presentation of the Soviet case and the quicker the world appreciates it, the better. Of course the comment may be justifiably made that the present Russian attitude is as shortsighted and suicidal as was the anti-communist complex of the democracies for the last score of years. I leave it at that for the present until more light is thrown on the latest Molotov "Breadbasket"—or is it going to be a mere "Cocktail"?

To offset the alleged diplomatic victory of the Nazis, there has been a very real and very resounding triumph for Britain in the last week. The attack deli-

vered by the Air Arm of the Royal Navy on the Italian fleet snugly resting in Taranto was as audacious in conception as it proved brilliant in execution. It was in the best traditions of Drake, Raleigh and Nelson. But the loss inflicted upon the Italian fleet looks like a veritable miracle. Three formidable battleships of the latest type, two cruisers and two auxiliary ships virtually put out of commission at the cost of just two bombers is nothing else! Britain surely needed this stroke of luck: It is something to go on with, as Mr. Amery modestly commented.

The tremendous significance of this naval victory was brought out in its proper relief by Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, when he observed that as a result thereof the numerical superiority of the Italian battle fleet had been reduced to inferiority. The strategic situation in the Mediterranean brought about by the fall of France has been now retrieved to a great extent and this will have decisive reactions not only upon the fortunes of Britain but also of her Allies in the Near and Middle East. Greece, Turkey, Egypt—all feel more heartened to-day than they ever were during the last 14 months and this victory will not be lost even upon General Franco and Marshal Petain.

*November 22, 1940*

Adolf Hitler seems to have developed a sense of history. He is at present busy in Vienna laying the foundations of his New Order for Europe.

Hungary has already accepted the New Order by joining the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan. What her function *vis-a-vis* those three Big Bullies is, yet remains to be seen but it cannot be denied that Hungary's adhesion is the first fruit of the Central European Conference. Herr von Ribbentrop, who has convened the Conference, has naturally done

his best to boost his fresh diplomatic triumph. He even went to the length of prophesying a restoration of peace "in the not too remote future" as a result of the weight of the new alliance. After Hungary—who? Rumania is now merely a satellite of Berlin and her signature may be expected as a matter of course. Then Bulgaria, too, may be trusted to follow suit after the secret visit of King Boris to Berlin last week. Spain has long been an ardent admirer of the Axis and her formal adhesion may follow any minute.

This is a pretty big catch for Hitler. But he is not the person to rest content with that. His aim is to dominate the whole of Europe, to marshal all the free European States under his baton, to declare himself the guardian of Axis-ridden Europe and thus to confront his enemies with a *fait accompli* of enforced peace in the Continent. What will have Britain left to fight then? Any continuation of hostilities would be sheer aggression on her part! Acceptance of the New Order would only be a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* for her.

It is a very deep game indeed and it is obvious that all his energies are directed towards that end for the last few months. After the failure of his aerial Blitzkrieg on Britain, he seems to have developed this peace offensive. It is a Machiavellian move and in this light alone can be explained his appeasement of Petain, courtesy call upon Franco, reception of Molotov and now this journey to Vienna. That is, again, why his vast armies are merely marking time from one end of Europe to another for the last five months. This also explains why he has so far not rushed aid to his junior partner, who is now in danger of being booted out from Albania altogether. He does not want to make Bulgaria and Yugoslavia his enemies by violating their neutrality. He rather hopes that they will both sign on the dotted line so that the descent of his divisions into Greece would be accomplished through the territory of his new Allies.

He is really showing a great deal of unwonted patience in wooing this Balkan fry. He has hopes even of drawing Turkey into the Axis net by suitable blandishments and diplomatic pressure. He is trying his best to prevent an open clash of arms with that redoubtable people. Students of European history, however, know too well the fate of the Congress of Vienna which was called a hundred and twenty-five years ago to settle the future of Europe after the deportation of Napoleon to St. Elba. That Congress literally vanished into thin air as the news of the French Emperor's return to Paris reached its startled ears. History may well repeat itself though now it is the Dictator, who is again bestriding the continent like a Colossus, who has himself convened the Congress. Whatever may be the magnitude of the diplomatic triumphs which Hitler may gain in Vienna and whatever may be the number of European Governments who may be coerced into hailing him as their guardian angel, it is not going to bring real victory for Germany or abiding peace for Europe. Britain may be faced with a *fait accompli* of sham peace but it will not induce her to lay down her arms. On the contrary she has once again stressed, through the mouth of her King on the occasion of opening the new session of Parliament, her inflexible determination to continue the fight until victory is won. Or it may be added, until she is utterly vanquished. But that contingency is now long since passed as Hitler realises too well. Otherwise he would not have stooped to flirt with Franco or to kowtow to Count Csaky.

According to Washington reports this Vienna Conference is essentially a face-saving device to cover up the failure of the recent Hitler-Molotov talks. It is said that Hungary was chosen to offset Russia's refusal to join the Axis. But was the Soviet really expected by even the super-optimist Ribbentrop to be an official member of the Axis? It sounds not merely wishful but fantastic thinking to expect any such

thing from the enigmatic Stalin. Benevolent neutrality, yes. But active alliance, no. A very emphatic No. But we must not go to the other extreme and believe that the Soviet will go out of its way to snub Hitler and to oblige Britain. Stalin has not forgotten Munich and the Four Power Conference though its unfortunate author is no more and he has in fact lost no opportunity of rubbing it in. Now he will never go out of his way to draw anybody's chestnuts out of the fire. The Soviet foreign policy thus remains a riddle as much for Britain as for Germany and the friends of democracies can at best draw cold comfort from Stalin's inscrutable attitude. He has not so far replied to the overtures made to him by the British Ambassador as long ago as the 22nd of October and it is apparent that he is not quite satisfied by the extent of British advances. Nor does the halting and professorial utterances of Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Minister, in the House of Lords give us much hope of any rapid Anglo-Soviet rapprochement.

But if the Soviet is only a riddle to the belligerents, her attitude represents a positive danger to a neutral—Turkey. Turkey can be said to have, in a sense, hitched her wagon to the Soviet star for twenty years now, though it must be stressed that she has strictly maintained her independence both in her internal and foreign policy. That is why she signed the pact of friendship with Britain and France in May, 1939, though it was obvious even then that such a development would not be quite welcome to the Soviet. The Russo-German pact of non-aggression of 23rd August 1939 came as a bombshell to the world but nowhere more so than to Turkey. It queered the pitch for her and since then she has been dexterously balancing herself on a diplomatic tight-rope. While she remains firm in her commitments to Britain, she is naturally anxious to retain the goodwill of the Soviet—a job which has been getting more and more delicate and difficult in recent months.

It is generally believed that Turkey was very much on the tapis during the Hitler-Molotov talks. Hitler is said to have urged that the Soviet should use its influence to wean Turkey from her friendship with Britain. In that case the Turks would be assured their due place in the New European Order and would even be allowed to retain their control of the Straits. But if Turkey remained adamant in her British alliance, the Soviet was pressed to withdraw its sympathy and support from her and to leave her to the tender mercies of the Axis. What was the Soviet to gain from this betrayal? A share in the control of the Straits and a free hand in the East were dangled as its reward. In other words for accepting the Axis dominance of the Balkans, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and even India were to be earmarked as the exclusive spheres of Soviet influence.

It is indeed a delightful arrangement. Hitler wants the Soviet's blessings for what he has grabbed and is very generous in handing over to the Soviet what he does not own! All for betraying an old ally. Will Stalin consent to such a robber's pact? Will his *realpolitik* prevail upon him to repeat his performance in Poland? He may not. He may. Turkey still hopes for the best but is rapidly preparing for the worst. At any rate she is not allowing her surprise over the Berlin talks to develop into a panic. While a break with the Soviet would be a grievous handicap to her, she seems to be gradually reconciling herself to that eventuality, if come it must. Under any circumstances she will not allow her integrity and independence to be violated by anybody.

November 29, 1940

The Nazi designs in the Balkans received a checkmate last week. To begin with, Turkey has virtually put herself on a war-footing, blackout and all, and

is ready to receive the Nazi legions. Secondly, Bulgaria has managed at the eleventh hour to remain out of the Nazi parlour by recalling its Prime Minister, M. Filoff, and the Foreign Minister, M. Popoff, half-way from their journey to Berlin to sign on the dotted line. Thirdly, Yugoslavia is yet maintaining her neutrality in spite of all threats and blandishments.

What are the reasons of this surprising denouement, which could have been hardly foreseen even eight days ago? Then the Hitlerian "New Order" seemed to be going very strong. Hungary's admission to the Axis was hailed as only the first of the series. Rumania followed suit and next Slovakia. But there the march of the New Order stopped very abruptly. It seems more than a temporary halt. It is a virtual breakdown. Now Berlin tries to save its face by giving out that the first round of new admissions to the New Order is closed. The Master of the Axis is now content to have three senior and three junior partners on its roll. Even Spain, which is being strenuously wooed for the last six months, is apparently to be left out in the cold!

This amazing development can be traced first and foremost to the gallant resistance of the Greeks to the Fascist invasion. The fact that David has kicked out Goliath from the Greek soil and has got him on the run even in Albania has bucked up his Balkan brothers no end. The latter now seem more encouraged than they ever were not to knuckle under the aggressor's threats. This stiffening is most discernible in Turkey which now shows itself not much concerned even with the Soviet attitude.

Next, even Yugoslavia has taken heart from the example of Greece and is trying her best to extricate herself from the tentacles of the Nazis, in which she has been placed by the policy of her former Premier Dr. Stoyadinovitch. In the case of Bulgaria, what prevented her King from rushing into the Nazi arms is the latest Moscow orientation. It sounds amusing but

the recall of MM. Filoff and Popoff from the express train to Berlin was directly due to the broadcast of the week-old proceedings in the Bulgarian Parliament from the Moscow Radio. I have observed more than once that Stalin seems to have lately developed a very keen sense of humour. But this ethereal contretemps will remain for a long time the highlight of Soviet diplomacy. It provided an indirect but unmistakable warning to King Boris. He seems to have been sorely tempted to throw his lot with Hitler's New Order. Bulgaria is notorious in Europe as an irredentist country and has territorial demands to make on each of her neighbours. Hitler must have promised the satisfaction of the Bulgarian land hunger at the cost of Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece. But for the present at any rate King Boris has become Soviet-shy.

This subtle snub to Bulgaria confirms the earlier reports that Hitler drew blank from his recent meeting with M. Molotov, which was hailed as a great diplomatic triumph for the Nazis. The Soviet Foreign Minister has naturally maintained a discreet silence over the deliberations in Berlin and he may be trusted not to precipitate any sudden and violent departure in his policy. But it is very evident that not only is there a cooling off of the Nazi-Soviet entente but that gradually the Soviet is striking an independent line of action. It has been the Soviet's insistent claim that it has been always doing that, but at any rate so far it studiously refrained from treading on the Nazi toes. M. Molotov is reported to have told Hitler during their meeting that the *status quo* in the Dardanelles and the Black Sea must not be violated. More than that. A Swiss paper reports that Moscow refused to recognise the Axis as a bloc with which to negotiate, and M. Molotov treated exclusively with Germany on problems limited to the two countries. This is a most serious checkmate to Hitler indeed, and he will have to revise not merely his diplomacy but his military strategy in the light of his Moscow reorientation. It

has already queered the pitch in Bulgaria and the plan to invade Palestine and Egypt through Asia Minor across the Dardanelles will have to be put now in cold storage owing to Soviet insistence on the *status quo*.

Hitler now is on the horns of a dilemma. He must do something to extricate his ally from the mess in Greece—and do it quick. The Italian setbacks are doing no end of harm to the Axis cause. Franco's vacillation, for example, as also Petain's non-appeasement is directly due to it, while the morale of the Balkan people is today far higher than it ever was. One indeed wonders why Hitler has not moved ere this and sent the armies, which he is reported to have massed in Rumania long since, to help in the invasion of Greece. Possibly it is a subtle game of double-crossing. He desires to put Mussolini in his proper place and conclusively bring home to him his dependence upon the Nazis. The Italian insistence on Nice, Corsica and Tunis is proving a great embarrassment to Hitler in his negotiations with Vichy and a little more stewing in his own juice will, the Fuehrer so long believed, do a lot of good to the Duce. He can then be prevailed upon to waive his claims upon France so as to rope in Petain subsequently.

December 6, 1940

When the history of the present war comes to be written, November will in retrospect appear as decisive a month as April in the fortunes of hostilities.

In April came Hitler's invasion of Norway and the disaster that met the Allied Expeditionary Forces. That sorry reverse and the amazing revelations about British war preparations that were made in the House of Commons in its wake, indirectly encouraged the Fuehrer to begin his Blitzkrieg on the Western Front.

In November the Duce tried to imitate his senior partner and launched a sudden and unprovoked attack

on Greece. He, too, naturally expected his victim to crumple under his onslaught as Norway did. A quick and cheap victory appeared then to be very essential to bolster up the flagging morale of his people. After vanquishing the Greeks the Fascist legions were to be sent in glory to mop up the main enemy in Libya! But the Blitzkrieg has proved to be a veritable nemesis for the Italian dictator. We behold an astonishing reversal of roles in Albania today with the Greek advance divisions hot in pursuit of the demoralised Italian armies.

Once bitten, twice shy. And having sober memories of the fate that ultimately came upon the no less valiant Finnish soldiers during their campaign against the Soviet, one sort of refrained from hallooing before the Greeks were out of the woods. Obviously, a small nation like that of the Hellenes cannot be said to be out of danger until the very end of the war, but at any rate their achievements up to date have been sufficiently outstanding and convincing to warrant any further studied reserve on the part of a war commentator. It is no mere flash in the pan. The Greek people have literally covered themselves with glory and even if, at any future date, they may have the misfortune to be engulfed in the Totalitarian tide, they have given a decisive re-orientation to the fortunes of war. Britain has reason to be profoundly grateful for the part played by the descendants of Alexander and Pericles during the last four weeks—a part which not even their most ardent admirers would have dared to hope a month ago.

Let us draw a strategic balance sheet of the situation as it obtains at the end of the first week of December, 1940. To begin with Italy, her stock is now at a very low level indeed. Nobody ever exaggerated the fighting qualities of the easy-going Latin, but one recognised that the Fascists had a considerable nuisance value. Besides, the Duce lost no opportunity of emphasizing the striking power of his Navy and Air

Force, both of which, on paper, appeared to be very imposing. The Greeks have scraped the gilt off the Fascist Fighting Forces and revealed the tinsel beneath. The complete rout of the famous Alpini Divisions, which were specially selected and trained for mountain warfare, at the hands of the Greek Evzones, proves that man for man the Greeks are far superior to the Italians. And it must be remembered, moreover, that the latter were better armed and equipped than their adversaries.

Next in importance to the land successes of the Greek armies—but only next—are the British naval victories, at Taranto and off Sardinia which were made possible by the Greek resistance. One can even say that taking the long view of things, the crippling of the Italian navy in November will go down as a more effective and enduring contribution to the ultimate success of the Allies' cause than the defeat of the Italian army. To-day the Italian war fleet is a mere fraction of what it was six months ago, in tonnage as well as morale. Considering that on the sea Italy was the senior member of the Axis, this spiking of her naval guns is an event of paramount importance. So long a large part of the British Navy had to be detailed for patrol work in the Mediterranean. But now that the teeth of the Italian navy are extracted, so to say, a considerable number of destroyers and cruisers from the Mediterranean Fleet can be spared to hunt down the Nazi submarines and raiders in the Atlantic.

As with the Italian Army and Navy, so with the Italian Air Force, which, too, represented a considerable striking weapon—on paper. In Albania, at any rate, it has proved a complete failure. Its dive-bombing attacks miserably failed either to stop the Greek advance or to cover the Italian retreat. A few squadrons of the R.A.F. have easily established their supremacy over their Italian opposites, even though the latter were far superior in numbers and were operating so near their home bases.

To sum up, while it would be absurd and short-sighted to exaggerate the significance of the present reverse of Italy or to suggest that she is already in the process of liquidation as a belligerent, it cannot be gainsaid that, to put it at the very least, Mussolini has exposed his Achilles' heel to his enemies, strategically as well as morally. What must be more galling to him than his actual military failure is what the Chinese call "the loss of face". And that loss operates, paradoxically enough, more with his own partner than with his opponents!

There is an unmistakable rift in the Axis lute. But it will be rash to imagine that it will widen into a positive breach. Gangsters may occasionally fall out but they still have to act in unison to save their own skins. Something like this is the case with Hitler and Mussolini. Howsoever they might have begun to dislike or underrate each other, they are bound to carry on conjointly towards their common end of aggrandisement. It is inconceivable, for example, that Hitler will allow Mussolini to crack completely and become *hors de combat*. Any separate peace by Italy would for him be unthinkable. Sooner or later, therefore, he will have to intervene in the Greek affair in his own interest. Nor can he rub the Duce very much the wrong way and thus flare up the already smouldering dissensions betwixt them.

On what terms and grounds Hitler will operate remains to be seen. He may decide to march through Spain towards Africa or take on the Greek campaign on his own by ordering his divisions to invade Yugoslavia. But he cannot certainly remain inactive much longer in view of the rapid demoralisation of Italy. Thus Hitler, too, figures in the Greek balance sheet. His Balkan egg basket is very near being smashed by the unexpected developments in Albania. The Fuehrer seemed to be anxious to exploit the Balkan countries economically and thus replenish his rapidly dwindling stocks of food and raw materials. He counted upon

the little Balkans to submit to his *Diktat* without demur and he had begun to nurse them patiently. The Greeks have not only queered Hitler's pitch in the Danubian basin, but have given a rude jolt to the Nazi applecart in Syria, Spain and France. Franco seems to have practically backed out, while Petain shows no signs of walking into the Nazi parlour. And all the while, the threatened Axis pincer grip on the British positions in the Near and Middle East shows no prospect of developing at all.

## V

## SECOND ROMAN EMPIRE R.I.P.

*The Italian people created the Empire with their blood, will make it fruitful with their work, will defend it against anyone with their arms. In this supreme certainty, Legionnaires, raise high your banners, your arms, your hearts, and salute, after fifteen centuries, the Empire that appears again on the fateful hills of Rome.*

—Benito Mussolini

December 13, 1940

THE Duce seems to be getting a stiff dose of the Fuehrer's patent medicine at the hands of General Archibald Wavell in the Western Desert. It was Blitzkrieg alright which the British Forces in the Middle East began in the early hours of Sunday morning. And the results thereof, even if not so spectacular as those reaped by the Nazi armies in France last May, are certainly extremely encouraging. Few of Britain's most active sympathisers would have been so optimistic as to prophesy that the British troops would advance 75 miles in the desert at one bound as it were, capture more than 30,000 Italian prisoners including a number of generals and other high officers, and gain such a highly fortified position as Sidi Barrani—all within three days of the initial thrust. Coming so quickly after the remarkable successes gained by the Greeks in Albania, this victory has certainly sent the Allies' stock soaring high up.

From the vigorous manner in which the attack is being pressed home, the question naturally arises whether the objectives set by the British Commander-in-Chief are restricted in scope or whether they envisage a major and decisive war against the Italian armies under Marshal Graziani. The situation can be better appreciated when it is realised that the battle is yet being fought in Egyptian territory and that very severe as have been the losses in men and material

inflicted upon the Italians, the latter's frontiers in Libya are yet inviolate. Technically speaking, even the capture of Sollum, which may be soon expected now, will merely restore the *status quo*.

It is significant that both General Wavell and Premier Churchill refused to discuss the high strategy of the present operations. The latter, indeed, confined himself to the summing up that Britain's guarantee that Egypt would be effectively defended against all comers has been in every way made good now. It is a very cautious observation and that caution is entirely justified not merely by the nature of the desert warfare but also by the background of the whole war. The main and mighty adversary of Britain is not Italy but Germany and whatever gains or losses accrue to Britain must be assessed in the light of her position *vis-a-vis* Germany. The strength of a chain is that of its weakest link and it is certainly sound tactics to concentrate on the junior end of the Axis. Greece has already delivered a stinging blow to Mussolini and now comes the smashing attack in the Middle East. It is obvious that the Duce is finding himself in deep waters and now is the time to deliver a K. O. to him.

While it is readily admitted that the R.A.F. has already established its supremacy over the Italian air force in Libya, it is more by virtue of its better machines and more capable pilots than by a decisive majority in numbers. The display of Italian aircraft has, indeed, surprised its friends and enemies alike. The Caproni C A 133 and Savoia Marchetti S M 79 three-engined bombers have proved clumsy in operation and very vulnerable to attack while the Fiat C R 42, Italy's main Fighter Plane, is no match to British Hurricanes and Spifires. The success obtained by General Wavell so far is in a large measure due to the very effective co-operation of the R.A.F. but the latter will have to be augmented by many more squadrons before the task of driving out the Italians from Libya can be undertaken.

Again, after the first lightning thrust, the British forces will have to make sure of their lengthening line of communications—a very decisive factor in a desert. The sit-tight tactics followed by Marshal Graziani at Sidi Barrani were actuated mainly by the difficulty of maintaining adequate supplies. Britain's chief base in the Western Desert is at Mersa Matruh and every mile of further advance means so much added difficulty of supplying the forward units. Evidently the British forces will be far better off than the Italian in view of the former's command of the sea which is denied to the latter. But even then the factor of maintaining long lines of communications will have to be taken into consideration.

Marshal Graziani has yet under his colours a force of 300,000—a number superior to that of General Wavell's army. Now that the task of clearing the enemy from the Egyptian territory is being accomplished, the latter may await further reinforcements before carrying the hostilities into Libya. Time is now very much against the Duce and unless something decisive is done to retrieve his crumbling fortunes, Mussolini's Empire may well collapse in the near future. The Fascist morale is rapidly declining under the continued reverses and it is notorious that the heart of the Italian people at large has never been in the war. The recent general post in the High Command is reported to have created intense dissatisfaction in the army. With his navy crippled, his air force proved so woefully inefficient and with discontent gradually spreading into the rank and file of the army, Mussolini's lot appears to be very unenviable indeed.

*December 20, 1940*

What Mussolini meant to be the Battle of Egypt has turned out to be the Battle of Libya. That is the sum total of the operations in the Middle East during the last two weeks.

The British Forces in the Western Desert have finally swept off the Italian Army from the Egyptian soil and marched into the enemy's territory. Fort Capuzzo, which is just on the Italian side of the border, was captured at the very first onslaught though the town and port of Bardia, which was the next objective, has so far offered a determined resistance. It is hardly likely, however, that the Italians can long withstand the fierce pressure of British attack. Mr. Churchill gave a most cheerful account of the latest victorious operations in the Middle East and revealed for the first time the hazards which Britain had to face after the fall of France, when the whole balance of power was violently shifted in favour of Italy.

The results which the British have reaped are as striking as they will prove far-reaching. The very initial coup of the British forces in surrounding and causing an Army Corps to surrender within 72 hours of the first advance is unprecedented in modern warfare. The latest G.H.Q. Communiqué from Cairo reveals that over and above the 31,000 Italian prisoners (including 1,626 officers) "actually counted," there are several thousand more still in the process of evacuation from the battle area! Those numbers, staggering as they are, do not tell the whole tale. For the advance divisions of Marshal Graziani contained the flower of the Italian colonial army as also a large number of its mechanised units. The division under the command of General Maletti, who was killed in action, was equivalent to the Panzer Korps of the Germans.

Grievous as the loss of all those high officers and men is, perhaps more important to the future will be the enormous armaments, transports, equipment, oil and food stores which have fallen virtually intact into the hands of the British. Among them are a hundred guns, fifty tanks and numerous army lorries which are proving of great help to the rapidly advancing British troops. The significance of this is all the more

enhanced when it is considered that until December 16 the British casualties, including those missing were less than 1,000. This sounds too ridiculous to be true but coming on the authority of Mr. Eden, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of those figures.

But more than the immediate military gain will be the moral reaction of General Wavell's offensive. It has reassured Britain's friends and given her enemies something to think. It has already had an electrifying effect throughout the Middle and Near East. Egyptians are naturally wild with jubilation that the threat to their integrity is at last over. The Turks consider that "the Egyptian battle will spread the conviction throughout the world that Britain is going to win the war—a conviction which in itself will contribute to Germany's downfall."

Last week there was the sensational report that 40,000 Nazi soldiers with huge equipment were assembled in Naples and Bari and were awaiting transport to Albania and/or Libya. Many other German divisions were said to be pouring through the Brenner Pass. This was as good a scare as any in the present war. While it would be foolish to dismiss its possibility altogether, the report appears to be rather exaggerated. At any rate it is premature. In the first place it is not certain that Hitler is anxious to aid Italy in the manner indicated except for a very stiff price. Secondly Mussolini is not likely to resort to such a drastic remedy except in extreme circumstances. While the Greek and the British victories have undoubtedly given a severe shake-up to Fascist prestige and power, it is absurd to suggest that Mussolini's regime is already *in extremis*. His hold upon his people is yet strong and secure, thanks to his Blackshirts and the Italian reverses so far have not certainly endangered the stability of the State.

Inviting the Nazis would be a sure way of bringing to a head the domestic troubles that face the Duce. He has to reckon with the disaffection of the

Italian people who have been dragged into the war much against their will. The blockade, the winter, the bombing and now the military disasters have all joined in increasing the grumbling among the masses. The Duce is no longer the idol who will do no wrong. The god has come down from the Olympus and revealed his feet of clay. This is a fatal position indeed for a dictator. More dangerous than the so far passive discontent of the people at large is the ill-concealed unrest in the Army, which has assumed serious proportions since Badoglio and other high military officers were sacked to cover the disgrace to Italian arms in Albania. The spectre of Civil War has thus begun to cast its ugly shadow on the Italian scene and, strange as it may seem, that sinister prospect is likely to be brought nearer than otherwise by the admission of Nazi troops into the country. For the latter will now march less as Allies than masters to save the Duce from his doom. In spite of the grave blunders he has committed, Mussolini is shrewd enough to see that it will not be a friendly expeditionary force but a virtual army of occupation when the Nazis goose-step before the Palazzo Venezia!

Hitler's wooing of Petain for the last three months has hardly brought in any adequate reward though in that process he displeased the Duce and made him jump into the Greek disaster. The recent dramatic dismissal of his stool-pigeon M. Laval by the aged Marshal must have given him a rude shock and though M. Flandin is as pro-German as his predecessor, the policy of the Vichy Government is becoming more and more unpredictable. Under any circumstances after the latest developments in the Middle East, there appear little hopes left for Hitler of being able to grab the French Fleet.

The strains in the Axis are becoming increasingly severe and perceptible. Badly beaten in the air war over Britain, baulked in the Balkans, drawing a blank in France, the Fuehrer finds himself only

deeply involved in the Duce's blunders! He would fain allow the latter to stew in his own juice but for the fact that if once the rot starts, it will work itself gradually into the Reich as well.

*December 27, 1940*

The second Christmas of war has passed off, like the first, more or less peacefully. There has been an unofficial bombing truce but the credit for that goes not to any of the belligerents but to the Clerk Of The Weather.

One of the numerous forecasts made regarding Hitler's next move was that he would attempt an invasion of Britain on Christmas Eve. The recent activities of the Luftwaffe gave colour to such a suggestion and special precautions were taken to guard against the possibility of any lightning landing of German troops aided as they were by typical Christmas weather. The invasion, however, yet remains an unfulfilled dream of the Fuehrer and the latest reports switch the scene of Nazi activity to the Balkans. The situation there is said to be reaching a climax owing to the growing tension between Germany and Russia and the impending debacle of Italy. It is hinted that Hitler has at last definitely decided to take a hand in the campaign in Greece and heavy troop movements are reported from Hungary.

If the Fuehrer really wants to aid Mussolini and extricate him from the present politico-military morass, he will have not only to send his divisions into Albania to fight the Greeks and into Italy to buttress the tottering Fascist regime, but also to dispatch an expeditionary force to Libya to help Marshal Graziani. For there is the real enemy of both of them and balked so far in his proposed invasion of Britain, he may well decide to make the Middle East the decisive theatre of war. The development above-

mentioned will be full of dramatic irony because the Italians always desired that their grand assault on Egypt should synchronise with the historic German invasion of Britain. Now Hitler is foiled while Mussolini is swept back into Libya. If the former now turns his gaze to the Western Desert, it will be as much to save his own face as the integrity of Italy.

How can Hitler send reinforcements to Africa? Three ways are open to him: First, through Italy to Tripoli via the narrow stretch of the Mediterranean. Second, across Spain via the Straits of Gibraltar. Third, by marching through unoccupied France to Marseilles and then to a convenient French or Italian port in North Africa. All these alternatives entail encounters with the British Mediterranean Fleet and before Hitler can send his troops, he has to find ships to convey them and a navy to convoy them!

Whether in Libya or in her own island home, Britain is now ready to face her foe with hope, confidence and faith. This is indeed a heartening thought for all lovers of democracy at the end of a most memorable year in history. Few of Britain's friends could have visualised in those black days of June, when the bottom seemed to be falling from the world, that Britain would turn the corner so rapidly—if ever at all. The threatened German invasion had cast its ominous shadows not only across Britain but over all the earth. The first phase of the Battle of Britain which began in the air in August was successfully concluded by the end of September and even if it is resumed again, the odds are not so heavy against the defenders as they were six months ago.

As Mr. Churchill is fond of saying, wars are not won by defensive actions howsoever successful. The much needed offensive was soon to follow and General Archibald Wavell's magnificent march through the Western Desert following the thrilling victories of Greece marks a definite turning of the tide in favour of Britain. Britain enters the new year with her con-

fidence restored, with the disparity in military preparations very much reduced in her favour, with her factories pouring out armaments and munitions in ever-increasing numbers and the United States going all out to aid her.

*January 3, 1941*

The New Year was heralded by two major events both of which will leave their mark on the development of hostilities in 1941.

The first was the Great Blaze of London on Sunday night which promises to become as historic as the Great Fire of London. Foiled for the last six months in its repeated attempts to destroy the metropolis of the British Empire, the Luftwaffe made a fiendish and deliberate attack to set the heart of the City of London ablaze. An enormous number of incendiary bombs were showered wantonly and indiscriminately for more than two hours on Sunday night and the Nazis have the ghoulish satisfaction of having gained their objective in a considerable measure.

"A picture of macabre splendour," "the greatest fire-raising attempt", "ghastly scene of devastation", "ring of fire all round" are some of the descriptions of the Great Blaze. Another correspondent writes:—"Over the great city, there gradually rose up the red glow of fire, so vivid, so wide-spread, that it resembled a glowing sunset. Onlookers knew that a fearful tempest of fire must be raging." This is enough to show the sheer barbarity of it all. Londoners surely have received a severe knock and suffered material damage the extent of which cannot be easily assessed. But even if the noble edifices of the city of London are razed to the ground and all their contents are burnt or gutted, the heart of London throbs still—throbs with a new urge for revenge, to pay Hitler back in the same coin.

That is why I observed at the outset that the Blaze of London will leave its mark on the future course of events. It opens a new phase in the present totalitarian war, the end of which one cannot easily foretell. The Nazis have always revelled in sheer terrorisation, not merely as a tactics in their Blitzkrieg but for the love of it. Those who have read about the wanton machine-gunning of helpless refugees in Poland, Belgium and France by Goering's boys will not be particularly astonished by the latest burst of German savagery. For the latter the distinction is one of degree and not kind. But—and it is a big but—what Hitler and Goering do not seem to have bargained for is that unlike the Poles and Belgians and Frenchmen, the Britishers are in a position to drop bomb for bomb—plus a substantial interest.

Already the cry has gone forth for prompt and effective reprisals over Germany and though as a matter of policy the British Cabinet is not likely to declare that their motto henceforth will be "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," they are but human not to share their people's feelings. Already it is reported that Bremen has received a taste of the Nazi medicine and that it is a raging furnace after the visit by the R.A.F. on Wednesday night. What is it all going to end into?—one asks with horror. From the static phase of 1939 the war moved into active one in 1940. Is 1941 going to usher an incendiary era followed by smoke and poison gas involving the murder and mutilation of millions of innocent men, women and children?

If the red glow over London could be seen for hours and over scores of miles around, there has been another kind of glow created in the hearts of lovers of democracy as a result of the "fireside chat" of President Roosevelt on Monday night. The President addressed himself mainly to the American people but his words have given a new hope to the British people and in fact a new orientation to the war. Roosevelt

has, of course, always been against totalitarianism and though, as the head of the U.S.A. Government he has been officially a neutral, he has never disguised where his real sympathies lay. But for the first year of war, he had to be very restrained and careful in his public utterances and actions in view of the presidential election.

Now as the first third-term President, Roosevelt is in the plentitude of his power and prestige. He is no longer afraid to hit a straight one and is confident that the people of America are behind him in his fight for democracy. But his "fire-side chat" was more outspoken than even his friends in Britain hoped, and his enemies of the Axis feared. It was a veritable broadside, not least effective for the hour it was timed. In essence it was a call to extend to Britain every available help short of going to war and a warning to his people against the evil forces in their midst. Britain represents America's first line of defence and if the former falls, the prospect for the latter will be perilous indeed. He declared his faith in the victory of Britain, but the duty of helping Britain towards that victory devolved upon the United States. "We must be the great arsenal of democracy and must apply ourselves to our tasks with the same resolution, the same urgency and the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as if we were at war."

*January 10, 1941*

Of the two great events of the last week, the fall of Bardia and "the purpose and pledge" given to democracies by President Roosevelt during the course of his historic Message to the United States Congress, the latter is easily the more momentous. Both were eagerly and confidently anticipated but if the former merely ends an episode in the operations in the Western Desert, the latter opens virtually a new era in the

titanic struggle that is going on in the Western hemisphere.

The ground was already prepared for the Message by the fire-side chat delivered by Mr. Roosevelt a week ago. But if the chat was informal and personal, the Message was delivered with the solemnity befitting the occasion and with all the authority of the President of the United States. It was a constitutional direction to the Congress as well as a clarion call to the people of America. President Roosevelt began with a grave warning that "the future safety of our country and our democracy are overwhelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders". Expatiating on this thesis, the President laid down the following three planks of his foreign policy: (1) All-inclusive national defence; (2) Full support to democracies; and (3) No acquiescence in Peace dictated by aggressors and sponsored by appeasers. (Note the sting in the tail.)

Warming up to his theme, President Roosevelt thundered: "Let us say to the democracies we, Americans, are vitally concerned in your defence of freedom. We are putting forth our energies, resources and organising powers to give you strength to regain and maintain a free world. We shall send you in ever-increasing numbers ships, planes, tanks and guns. This is our purpose and our pledge". It is gratifying to find that this pledge is already being redeemed as rapidly and as generously as possible. Even before the all-time record defence expenditure was announced, the President had established a Supreme Directorate to speed up the production of arms and ammunitions. This Directorate is vested with all the necessary powers and they have already started their work by making a public appeal for help in their task of "critical importance" and "surpassing urgency", to wit, "to create the arsenal of democracy in the United States."

In the expansion of the defence forces, the most spectacular is that of the Navy. The aim is to create

a Three-Ocean Navy divided into three Fleets, the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Asiatic. The personnel will be increased by 42,000 and the Navy's Air Arm will gain an added strength of 4,000 new planes. An army of one and a half million is visualised for the next year and naturally it will be built on the most modern, mechanised model. Perhaps, most significant of this expansion is the recruitment of five hundred G Men to defend the country against Fifth Columnists! Of the 17,485 million dollar estimated expenditure in the next year, national defence alone will consume 62 per cent., which works out at thirty million dollars a day! It is really a staggering figure considering that technically at any rate it is a peace-time budget. This reveals the grim determination of the United States to face the challenge to "the ability of the Democracies to employ their full resources of manpower, skill and plant."

The immense potentialities of America must, therefore, be translated into guns and tanks and planes and ships—planes above all—without a day's delay if they are to save for democracies "the Four Freedoms" formulated by the President in his Message. How much Britain is depending on this succour was hinted at by Mr. Churchill in his outspoken speech at a farewell luncheon party in honour of Lord Halifax, Britain's new Ambassador to the U.S.A. Again, the unprecedented and extraordinary step of investing an Ambassador with ministerial rank while in Britain is itself an indication of the pressing importance of Anglo-American co-operation. Mr. Roosevelt, on his part, has sent a personal emissary to Britain pending the formal appointment of a full-fledged Ambassador to succeed the egregious "off-the-record" Joseph Kennedy.

After three weeks siege, Bardia surrendered on the 5th instant less than three days bombardment from sea, air and land having sufficed to deliver the K. O. to the beleagured garrison. It was a hopeless

struggle from the very beginning and the doom of the garrison was finally sealed when their contact with the interior was cut off from the West. Nor do the Italian Blackshirts and Libyan levies seem to have had much heart in the fight from the fact that 30,000 prisoners and an immense booty were captured for less than a thousand British casualties! The capture of Bardia was organised with the same thoroughness, precision, co-operation between the different arms and economy of effort which has distinguished General Wavell's strategy so long. There was neither a show of bravado nor an undue haste in assaulting the fortress. General Wavell allowed it to ripen like a fruit on a tree and closed in only when he knew it would fall in his hands with the minimum shaking.

In fact, even allowing for the demoralisation in General Graziani's armies, the British G.H.Q. seems to have followed a new technique, which, though originally copied from the Nazis, has been simplified and perfected by them. The German victories in Poland, Holland, Belgium and France were certainly more spectacular but the price paid by the Nazis was relatively far too excessive. In the Western Desert the British have so far captured or destroyed 94,000 Italian troops with less than 2,000 casualties of their own. This proportion has probably never been bettered in the annals of warfare. The advance forces of General Wavell have lost no time in marching towards Tobruk, the next objective. That fort is better defended with extensive fortifications though the strength of its garrison is not yet known. The same technique which was followed so successfully so long, is being followed and while a ceaseless aerial offensive is going on as far away as Tripoli, the retreat from the west is being gradually cut off.

All the indications are that Tobruk will not last as long as Bardia: apart from the new confidence among British forces, the Rome Radio itself suggested that a few more positions will have to be surrendered

in view of the overwhelming strength of the British forces! After Tobruk, it is the turn of Benghazi, the capital of the province. London military circles consider that the more Italians are defeated, the better, but then Benghazi to Tripoli is a far cry. The strategic advantage of liquidating Italian rule in Libya altogether cannot be exaggerated in view of the ever-existing danger of Hitler sending his divisions to help Graziani or launching an independent offensive of his own in the Near East. But one must also consider the 800-mile stretch of sand between the Egyptian frontier and Tripoli.

Students of military strategy will be interested in one factor of the operations in the Western Desert. It is this that though they were confined purely to land and that, too, to miles and miles of level, sandy terrain, it was the air force and the navy rather than the army which played a decisive part in the victorious campaign. In fact the credit of the ridiculously low casualties in the latter goes to both the former! It sounds like a paradox but it can be easily explained. Taking a leaf from the book of the Luftwaffe, the R.A.F. began the offensive with a ceaseless and relentless plastering of the enemy aerodromes. The *Regia Aeronautica* has proved a poor match both in men and machines and half the battle was lost to Mussolini when his air force not only proved itself unable to give combat to the R.A.F. but was again and again caught napping on the aerodromes themselves! For example, on January 8th, about one hundred aircraft were heavily bombed aground the Benina aerodrome alone! The Royal Navy also has been of inestimable service to General Wavell. Not only did it command the sea and cut off both reinforcements and escape, but by keeping a constant shelling, it made the coastal roads (which are the only worthwhile roads in Libya) unserviceable to the enemy forces. Besides all hell was let loose by the Mediterranean Fleet on the Bardia fortress before the Australian contingent stormed

it in force! The credit for the brilliant victories in Libya is thus shared by all the fighting services.

*January 17, 1941*

On Tuesday last a sensational statement was broadcast from the Rome Radio to the effect that the Italian Empire was virtually cut off from the mother country. The speaker paid a handsome tribute to General Wavell and the British forces and dramatically concluded "We are quite prepared to take off our hats to them."

Listeners must have surely pricked up their ears on hearing this. We are so accustomed to abuses and distortions emanating from the Italian Press and radio that any praise of Britain is bound to cause considerable surprise. Like Doctor Goebbels, Signor Gayda is a past master of propaganda and for a number of years now he has been engaged in the pleasant pastime of putting salt on the British lion's tail. The Bari broadcasts have long been quite notorious and since Italy joined the war in June last, the vilifications and perversions of Fascist propagandists have reached a new height. How is it then that the Rome Radio, after twisting the tail of the British lion so long, should feel like respectfully saluting it all of a sudden? Are those admissions of "very considerable" losses etc. in Libya a sort of dying confession of Fascism? Is it a subtle attempt to create the ground for an ultimate—though not-so-distant—surrender? An air of credence is lent to such a view by the reports from America that Italy may soon sue for separate peace.

Be that as it may, there is no gainsaying the fact that Britain has achieved an outstanding success in Libya, the result of which will be nothing less than the liquidation of the entire African Empire of Mussolini. The history of Bardia is being repeated at Tobruk at present and gradually an overwhelming force is being

assembled around that doomed port. After Tobruk, it will be the turn of Benghazi and the whole of Cyrenaica will be under the British flag within a few weeks more. After that it is likely that, instead of trying to reduce the rest of Libya, General Wavell will pay his attention to Abyssinia where the flames of revolt are already assuming the proportion of a conflagration.

In Albania, too, the Greeks are marching from one position to another. For two months and two weeks now their gallant troops have kept a fierce pressure upon their enemies and if one does no longer feel like flying into raptures over their brilliant exploits, it is only because one has almost begun to take them for granted! But when the history of the present war comes to be written, the major credit for the turn of the tide at the end of 1940 will doubtless go first to General Metaxas, then to the Greek General Staff and, last but not least, to the Evzones and other Greek soldiers who have proved that men can be mightier than machines. The lesson the world learnt on the plains of Northern France in the middle of the year was unlearnt in the hills of Albania at its end!

Last week General Soddu followed the example of his predecessor and relieved himself of the command of the Italian Army in Albania ostensibly on grounds of illness. That shows the pass to which Italy has been reduced. If there is so much demoralisation at G. H. Q., the officers and soldiers in the field must be pretty fed up with it all. Add to this the growing spirit of rebellion among the Albanian levies and one no longer wonders over the Fascist serial of surrender and retreat which is being unreeled before our eyes. Probably no nation has suffered so many casualties in Generals in a single war as Italy has done within the short space of three months of the present war. A few of them like General Maletti were killed outright in action; some others tried to slink into the desert like the Blackshirt Berganzoli and were finally caught like a fox. A pretty many of them were wait-

ing with their valises in their hands for the voyage to Dehra Dun. And above all of them stand Marshals like Badoglio and Soddu who threw up their hands altogether and retired from their impossible charges! It seems a veritable epidemic among Generals.

How will Hitler help Mussolini?—that has been the question on everybody's lips for the last two months. A number of plausible answers were forthcoming, one among them being "by allowing him to stew in his own juice"! That Hitler has surely done and if he has now sent his Luftwaffe to Italy, it is mainly owing to the fear that the rot of Italian demoralisation would soon be spreading to the Reich as well, unless something is done to stop it in time. It must be admitted that whatever the Fuehrer might have lost by his delay in helping the Duce, he has achieved one signal thing: the perfect domestication of the Duce. Mussolini is no longer the fire-eating Fascist Chief, the pillar of the Axis, the terror of Europe and all that. Now he is the humble suppliant at the Nazi door, the jackal who is in mortal dread of being pounced upon by the lion any moment. Hitler can treat him as a vassal and not as an equal. No longer can he spoil the Nazi game by crying from the house-tops *Nice, Corsica, Tunis* and all those war-cries on which Fascism has thrived. Now he can be served in the servants' quarters!

The new year prospects thus appear to be rather unfavourable to Hitler and his strange inactivity during the last three months may well have cost him this war! Having said so much, it must be admitted that the site chosen for the location of the Luftwaffe is of considerable strategic value. Sicily forms the heel of Italy and the narrowest stretch of the Mediterranean separates it from the African shores. The Luftwaffe operating from such a base can threaten the British convoys to Egypt and cut the Mediterranean Fleet into two. Above all it can extend its operations to Libya and thus take a definite hand in the present

campaign in the Western Desert. I for one feel baffled, therefore, by Reuter's comment that "Nazi air intervention in the Mediterranean now takes form as unintelligible as it could be." Unintelligible it certainly is not. One wonders in this connection whether the present Nazi move was at all foreseen by the British General Staff. Spain has been long in the news as a probable theatre for German operations while Albania has been an obvious venue for the last two months. Has Britain been caught napping? One wonders. It would have been easy enough to prevent the Luftwaffe from establishing itself in Sicily by subjecting its aerodromes to a constant aerial bombardment. But to dislodge it now will not be half so easy.

Anyway Goering's boys have already trumpeted their presence in the Mediterranean sky by engaging into their favourite dive-bombing attacks upon a British convoy on the 10th inst. The honours of that combat are more or less even: The Luftwaffe has lost a number of bombers both during their first engagement and during the return visit of the R.A.F. to Catania, while for the Royal Navy, the SOUTHAMPTON is a total loss and the ILLUSTRIOUS has suffered severe damage. The Mediterranean Fleet has practically wiped off the Italian Navy but now it will have to face a new danger from the skies.

January 24, 1941

Though it sounds unchivalrous to say so, it must have been a merciful release for the beleaguered Italian garrison and the civil population of Tobruk when the British forces entered the town on the noon of Wednesday last.

Their ordeal was brief. It took only 36 hours from the initial attack for the opposition to cease, while Bardia fought on for more than two days. Tobruk was far better fortified than the latter and the garrison

had much longer time to prepare the defences. The water supply was more plentiful and the excellent harbour facilitated reinforcements. One must not forget the presence of the Luftwaffe in Sicily either. That, in spite of all those advantages, Tobruk should crumple so quickly shows the straits to which Marshal Graziani is reduced as also the low morale of the Italian troops. 20,000 Italian prisoners and a vast amount of guns and ammunition was captured at the cost of barely 500 British casualties. What is most significant is that no attempts were apparently made by Graziani to send any appreciable help to the garrison. The Fascist G.H.Q. seems to have long since given up the port as doomed!

It is estimated that two-thirds of the entire Italian Army in Libya is now destroyed together with a number of senior officers including one Admiral, who seems somehow to have been marooned at Tobruk! Of the eleven divisions eliminated, as many as eight were Metropolitan Divisions including a number of Crack Blackshirt regiments and the famous mechanised corps of General Maletti. The equipment lost can be better imagined than computed and its value in terms of the desert cannot be estimated at all. An impoverished country like Italy can never hope to make good the lost *materiel*.

Abyssinia is now ripe for a revolt internally and an attack externally and a showdown may be confidently expected in that region in the near future. During the last two weeks, we have been vouchsafed considerable information about the situation there. It appears that a British Mission has established itself secretly in the very heart of Ethiopia and is actively engaged in training and equipping the tribes. Already guerilla operations are being conducted on a vast scale and they are harrying and driving out the Italian outposts. The Italian hold on Abyssinia has all along been confined to the cities and other fortified positions. Much of the hilly country has retained its semi-inde-

pendent character and Mussolini's attempts at colonisation have so long proved a miserable failure. The Viceroy of Abyssinia, the Duke of Aosta, is reported to have under him a force of 60,000 Italian troops besides a large number of local levies. Many of the latter, however, are simply melting away and joining the ex-Emperor's standard. The process of disintegration of the much-boosted Fascist Empire has thus already begun and it will gather momentum every day.

The confident tones in which Haile Selassie spoke recently to a *Reuter* correspondent are symptomatic of the change in his fortunes. After five years of wilderness, he expects to regain his throne in the near future with the help of Britain. A regular army is being raised under his banner in the Sudan and this will considerably simplify the work of General Wavell. The recent evacuation of Kassala and the tactical retreat from all their advance positions show that the Italians are already reconciling themselves to the inevitable. The position of the Duke of Aosta is considerably worse than that of Marshal Graziani, cut off as he is from all communications with Rome. The Empire that Mussolini built so laboriously will soon cease to be. Italy is now a liability rather than an asset to Germany. Unfortunately for the Fuehrer, it is a liability that cannot be repudiated at this stage of the war. Nor does there seem to be any immediate prospect of retrieving the situation in favour of the Axis, for which Hitler himself is to a certain extent responsible. Even granting that it would have been strategically inadvisable for the Nazis to take a hand in the Battle of the Nile, they could have surely prevented the disaster that has overtaken Italy in Albania.

The tentative dispatch of the Luftwaffe to Sicily seems, therefore, to have been aimed more at Greece than at Britain. With the fall of Tobruk and the capture or annihilation of the major part of Graziani's army, there is little hope left of saving the Fascist

Empire in Africa or even of saving Africa for staging an Axis Blitzkrieg! Though Britain's life-line may pass through the Mediterranean an alternative if longer route is available to her via the Cape. But it is the only channel for the convoys to Greece and it is significant that the first dive-bombing attack of the Luftwaffe was delivered on such a convoy. Another pointer to this project is provided by the latest reports of a large-scale counter-offensive which the Italians are planning. Crack Alpini divisions are being landed on the Yugoslavian frontier and vast quantities of war material are being assembled. The presence of considerable Nazi troops in Italy is recently authenticated and it looks as if the gallant Greeks will face a severe ordeal in the near future. The task of the Nazi air squadrons in Sicily obviously is to prevent British help from reaching Greece.

## SWASTIKA OVER BALKANS

*It is my duty to testify before the whole nation that during these days I felt behind me the great and loyal shadow of the Fuehrer and the honour of the German Reich which has guaranteed our frontiers.*

—General Antonescu

January 31, 1941

WILL the second spring of war prove as decisive as the first? Everybody expects that the long-boosted, long-threatened and long-deferred final offensive of Germany against Britain will be launched during the coming spring. Some American observers even go to the extent of suggesting that it will be launched this very month before the mighty flow of the help promised by the United States under the Lend and Lease Bill begins, like the warming winds of April, to reach British shores. Under any circumstances April and May are taken to be the crucial months and both the principal belligerents are making their dispositions on that understanding.

It is significant that in his latest performance at the Sportspalast Hitler has avoided all reference to the proposed offensive. "We enter the new year with an armed might which is prepared as never before in German history", observed the Fuehrer. But he cannot obviously allow this huge armed might to vegetate and rust for any length of time. The Nazi legions are resting on their laurels since the collapse of France last June and it is a safe bet that the very momentum of this might will compel Hitler to launch the offensive.

The recent complete cessation of air attacks upon Britain is another indication of the coming whirlwind. Among the various theories set forth for this respite,

the most plausible is that the Luftwaffe is deliberately taking a holiday in order to rest and recondition both its men and machines for the Blitzkrieg-to-come. It is moreover reported that Goering has a new type of bombers at his command, which will be put into commission in the spring offensive. And even if the estimate of 35,000 planes as the strength of the Luftwaffe is dismissed as a gross exaggeration, the fact remains that it is still in a position to assemble a formidable striking force.

With the clearing of the weather the submarine campaign will also be resumed with redoubled fury. Hitler himself has threatened that in his last speech. A large number of U and E boats are being built in German dockyards and they will be sent on their deadly errands not only in the Atlantic but also in the Mediteranean. During the last two months Britain's shipping losses have been much below the average of the present war. From the peak in November they gradually went down to a new low in the third week of January. But nobody expects them to remain at this level and feverish attempts are being made to provide more escort both on water and in the air for the merchant convoys. The onus of their protection lies upon Britain's shoulders alone, while during the last war she was helped by Japan, Italy, France and in the later stages, by the U. S. too.

Hitler has an added incentive to concentrate on the submarine warfare. It is the expected ship-loads of munitions and armaments from the United States to Britain. He sternly warned the former against helping the latter. "Whoever wants to help Britain must know that every ship that comes near our torpedo-tubes will be torpedoed", he thundered and it is needless to add that this verbal torpedo was aimed mainly at the United States. Indeed it looks as if the Fuehrer hopes more from his navy—which means the U and E boats—than from his air force, whose wings were badly singed by Britain last September. The

conclusion is based upon sound premises. Both British statesmen and their American sympathisers have freely and frequently stressed the fact that Britain cannot continue the struggle without the help of the United States. If short shrift is given to the convoys that will bring that help, Britain must automatically collapse in the near future, what with her own plants and industries being "Coventried" by the Luftwaffe. So runs the Fuehrer's argument and it sounds a plausible argument. In fact Britain's Minister of shipping must have himself given the cue to Hitler when he appealed to the United States a few days ago to hurry up with the help programme. "Speed in delivering goods", declared Mr. Ronald Cross, "is more than half the battle". Ships and more ships was the crying need for Britain. And Mr. Cross prophesied that "The battle of 1941 will be a battle of the seas". This prophecy seems to gain in force with Hitler's threat.

*February 7, 1941*

Rumours are thick that Hitler will begin in right earnest his Balkan campaign in the very near future. During the last two weeks there has been feverish diplomatic activity in Sofia and Budapest, Belgrade and Bucharest. Nazi propaganda is active, particularly in Bulgaria, where a German Technical Exhibition was held during the last week of the last month and was attended by King Boris himself.

It does not require excessive imagination to guess what the aim of that exhibition must have been: It was obviously a variation of the same tune which was played in Denmark and Norway when the German Ambassadors exhibited a documentary film of the conquest of Poland at a special reception at their respective Embassies on the eve of the fateful invasion. The trick worked. Rumania is now a protectorate of the Reich and will provide an excellent central base

for the Balkan Campaign. The number of German soldiers in Rumania is estimated at two hundred thousand and more divisions are said to be still pouring in. The famous Panzer Korps are being massed on the borders not only of Rumania but of Hungary also. General Antonescu is a puppet in the hands of the Nazis and will loyally carry out all behests of the Fuehrer. The Hungarian War Minister General von Barta had recently been in Berlin to confer with Hitler, Ribbentrop and the Chief of Staff, Kietel.

The Nazi war of nerves which was being waged for the last five years in the Balkans as in the rest of Europe will now presumably give way to the real works. If that white war has not proved as fruitful as the Fuehrer hoped, it has not been very unsatisfactory either. Rumania and Hungary are moving as satellites in the German orbit. Yugoslavia and Bulgaria have so far refused to walk into the Nazi parlour in spite of the blandishments of Ribbentrop but it is believed in Berlin that they will toe the line with a little display of the Nazi might.

It seems to be the eve of *Der Tag* in the Balkans. THE DAY will soon dawn. A pro-Axis newspaper in the Balkans predicts that "a motorised German army will swoop through the Balkan Peninsula like a hurricane within a short time to deliver a blow so crushing that the enemy will never recover its senses." This is all very good, no doubt. The only point that needs clarification is the identity of that doomed enemy. All the Balkan nations are strictly neutral. There is a British representative yet in German-occupied Bucharest while the oily Papen is still accredited at Ankara. To cap all, Germany herself professes to be in no way involved in the Italo-Greek war!

Who is the enemy then to whom the Germans are preparing to deliver a crushing blow? The real enemy is, of course, Britain. But Britain is a far cry from the Balkans and it sounds rather odd that the former can

be crushed by a blow delivered at the latter. Shall we say then which are the neutral nations to be marked as Germany's next victims? Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are too puny and poor to be exalted as Germany's enemies. At any rate there is nothing to tempt Hitler in either of those countries and they are, moreover, more than willing to send their surplus goods to the hungry Reich. But both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria have the misfortune to stand in the way of the German drive to the East as well as to the South. If they are agreeable to allow the passage of German troops through their territories, Hitler will let them alone in a manner of speaking. All his diplomacy and propaganda, tactics and pressure were so long aimed at that consummation.

Nevertheless both of them have so far clung to the strict letter of their neutrality and they seem yet indisposed to grant Hitler's request. The developments during the last two months in Libya and Albania have given a new strength to their determination and they have so far resisted all pressure, though in a sort of "by-your-leave" manner. They realise too well that they have no ghost of a chance to withstand the Blitzkrieg if it once descends upon them. They know that they are honeycombed with German tourists, tradesmen and all other sorts of Trojan Horses besides having a fairly plentiful crop of indigenous Quislings and Lavals. That is why their diplomacy is as tortuous and multifaced as the Germans' own. They will never say a direct "No" to the Nazis; they are always ready to negotiate and talk over things, if only to gain time! No wonder the Fuehrer has become sick of all this playing for time. The winter is now approaching its end and the plans for the spring offensive must be cut and dried for being put into execution. It is significant that he is adopting a firmer tone not only in the Balkans but also towards Vichy. And it looks as if the first decisive move in the new phase of war will be in the Balkans, that is to say, through them.

It is suggested that Hitler is not immediately interested in the Near East but that his eyes are centred on the South—on the Mediterranean. He wants to cut the British life-line to the East and to launch an intensive submarine and air offensive simultaneously in the Atlantic and the Middle Sea. On the way he will deal suitably with Greece but that is not the main objective. He will crush it in his stride so to say, along with Bulgaria. The occupation of Bulgaria from all accounts thus appears to be imminent, as it provides a more direct and strategic route than Yugoslavia to the South. According to informed opinion in Turkey, after a swift occupation of Bulgaria, the Germans will head for Salonika in order to prevent the British from opening a second front there. The next objective will be to command the Straits in order to bottle up the Soviet in the Black Sea and to overawe the Turks.

The plan outlined above is no doubt strategically very clever. A lightning thrust through Bulgaria to Thrace and its speedy occupation would present the Soviet with a *fait accompli* at the same time dealing a stunning blow to Turkey, apart from paralysing Bulgaria altogether. Such a plan, however, appears not merely to be clever but too clever. If Hitler's main aim is to dominate the Mediterranean, why, it may be asked, should he travel there by such a round-about and hazardous route, when he is already striding Italy like a colossus and has planted his Luftwaffe in Sicily right at the centre of that sea? Even if he is finding it difficult to transport his mechanized legions through the Brenner Pass, he has only to say the word and despatch them via Occupied France. Hitler probably has a different goal to justify this Balkan detour, say the Near East with its rich oil wells and the distant wind-pipe of the British Empire—the Suez Canal. But even for a Drive to the East, Hitler must arm himself with a previous secret or open understanding with the Soviet to share the spoils

as he did in Poland. Hitler is no fool to start on an hazardous adventure of this nature without such an assurance. Otherwise, he will surely re-enact in the Near East the tragedy which befell Mussolini in the Middle East.

From the impending showdown in Balkans, let us turn to the long-threatened ultimatum to the Petain Government in France. During the last fifteen days there have been so many reports and contradictions, guesses and gossips, declarations and denials from Vichy and Paris, Berlin and New York, Madrid and Berne that it is difficult to extract the grain of truth from the ton of verbiage. Only one thing seems to be clear that Hitler has lost his patience with France as with Balkans and that he is making things hum. This may not indicate *Der Tag* by itself but it is surely a preparation for it.

Laval is again the villain of the piece. On this occasion, moreover, his villainy is not underhand but open. He is out to sell France to the Nazis—fleet, ports and all—and if Petain cannot be prevailed upon to play the part of the honest broker, he will himself grab and deliver the goods. There is no question of decency and honour left now and he hopes to overwhelm the aged Marshal by the very magnitude of his evil. Petain and his colleagues are in a most unenviable plight. If they surrender to Hitler and take Laval again to their breast like a viper, there is no knowing to what lengths he will seduce or bully them. They will have lost all their independence and will have constantly to dance to the tunes of Berlin. If they refuse to bow down, they must be prepared to face the logical consequences of such a step.

*February 14, 1941*

Are we nearing zero hour in the Pacific? Will the conflagration spread from the West to the East and en-

velop the whole world in its flames? Will the war come to India's door-step as it were? Those questions are not new. They are being asked since the war began in September 1939 and they gained an added import from the time Japan signed the Tripartite Pact. The issue is being discussed in an academical fashion for many months now. But during the last week it assumed a certain pressing urgency, a sinister and intimate significance as the shadows of Hitler's spring offensive began to lengthen over Europe. The jigsaw puzzle of the Nazi campaign is, piece by piece, falling into shape with the occupation of Rumania, the penetration of Bulgaria, the establishment of an air base in Sicily and the furious Nazi pressure on Petain. Will Japan, too, take the plunge and open her own offensive? Will the birth-pangs of the Nazi New Order in the West synchronize with those of the Nipponeese New Order in the East? In other words, is there any secret understanding between the Axis partners to stake everything on a gigantic gamble during the next month or two?

The issue, as I said, is facing the world for a good many months. So long the consensus of informed opinion was in favour of dismissing the periodical strident war-cries from Tokyo as bluff, bluster, brag-gadocio or bullying. Anything but the real stuff. The Land of the Rising Sun, the cognoscenti said, is approaching its sun-set. Japan, we were informed by American tourists, has fallen into the bottomless pit of China and cannot extricate herself. She has no oil, no iron, no rubber—and not even the guts to fight the democracies. If she attempts that, she will be virtually committing hara-kari. That was a comforting thought and seemingly justified by the events of the last year. There is no denying the fact that the Chinese "incident" has so far proved a disastrous flop and that the drain on Japan's man-power and material resources caused by five years of fighting has been extremely severe. Recent events show that she would be mighty

glad to come to some understanding with Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek even at the cost of some face.

All this may be true. But it may be equally true that she has yet got plenty of kick left in her. She may be really anxious to close the Chinese incident but only by way of cutting her losses before playing for high stakes. The speeches of Mr. Matsuoka, the Foreign Minister, and Baron Konoye, the Premier, during the last few months show as if the Japanese Government is at a diplomatic dead-end. But, on the other hand, this alternate hot-and-cold blowing may be deliberately devised in order to check the reactions of her potential enemies. It is computed that Japan has so far suffered a million casualties in Japan. This may be an exaggeration; but even if we reduce this figure by half, it certainly represents a grievous loss to the Army—grievous but not crippling. And as a matter of fact the front-rank crack regiments of the Army are yet mostly intact, as they were drafted for service not in China but on the Soviet-Japanese border. The loss of half or even a million out of five million which is the number of Japan's trained reserves, may damage but not put out of action the Japanese war machine.

How strong are her Air Force and her Navy? The former is virtually intact while the latter is practically unscratched. Japan, like Britain, is first and foremost a sea-power. Her navy ranks third in the world, with 9 battleships, 14 heavy and 24 light cruisers, 112 destroyers, 60 submarines and 6 aircraft carriers. These figures are two-year old. There must have been considerable additions lately as her construction programme is kept a closely guarded secret. Japan, therefore, yet remains a first-class power with a formidable war machine and a complacent view of her position is dangerous. The world refused to take even Hitler seriously and dismissed his speeches and writings as the ravings of a megalomaniac. But the Fuehrer refused to be killed by ridicule and gradu-

ally grew from a Jack-in-the-Box into a Frankenstein—the terror of Europe.

It may be a good pastime to cut jokes at and draw cartoons of the Japanese Jingoes. But we must never forget that they are a dangerous gentry, that they are at bay at present, and, therefore, capable of any mad-cap adventure. The world, unfortunately, does not know half so much of Japanese Fascism as it does of the German or Italian variety. The reason is not that Fascism is comparatively new in Japan but that Japan has never come out of the feudal stage, which, after all, is the mediaeval term for modern Fascism. The only change is that the bold, bad knights of old have now changed themselves into cold and calculating capitalists. The Samurai clan, which have ruled Japan throughout history, rule her still from behind the facade of a pseudo-democracy. Men like Matsuoka are confirmed and outspoken Fascists and they rule the roost politically, economically and militarily. They will stop short of nothing to hold the power they possess. An adventure abroad is proverbially the best way of stifling the discontent at home and even if all the tales about the grave unrest among the Japanese masses are true, they are likely to make out a case more for than against a major war in the eyes of Konoye, Matsuoka and Co.

That such a view has much to commend it, is evident from many recent events and statements. The various diplomatic and strategic moves of Japan seem to be designed with a definite objective in view: to solve as many of her present entanglements as possible and to clear the decks for decisive action—whatever it may be and against whomsoever it may be aimed. The role of arbiter which she is playing at present between Thailand and Indo-China is a most brilliant diplomatic victory and it may well be utilised to gain a strategic stranglehold not only over those two countries but over Dutch East Indies and Malaya. Thailand is practically a stooge of Japan while Tokyo

has now more *de facto* control over the French Colony than Vichy.

Then there is the occupation of Hainan which is being rapidly converted as a supply base for operations. This island, as a glance at the map will show, threatens not only Hongkong and the Phillipines but even distant Singapore. The troops evacuated from China are being disembarked at Hainan, which is also being fortified as a naval and aerial stronghold. Zero hour is apparently timed to strike after the preparations at Hainan are complete. Mr. Matsuoka may make frequent self-contradictory statements to throw dust into the eyes of the world but a method can be detected in all his madness. His statement before the Diet on February 2, for example, has been aptly called by Mr. Wickham Steed to be not merely a diplomatic manoeuvre but likely to prove as important as any military operation.

This view coming from such a high authority ought to be pondered over by all those who airily dismiss Japan's "bluster". Those quarters similarly pooh-poohed Italy's joining the war and it is really regrettable that they refuse to profit by past experience. Japan's economic position and public morale may be as bad as they say it is, but they are certainly not worse than that of Italy in June, 1940. Such considerations do not count with Fascist leaders like Mussolini or Matsuoka. I do not want to commit myself to the prophecy that Japan's zero hour is imminent. Even now a set of circumstances may arise which may compel her to postpone if not altogether withdraw from the proposed synchronised spring movement.

What are those circumstances? As regards Britain, Japan is not only ready but positively spoiling for a showdown. No time can be more favourable to measure swords with John Bull who is already fighting with his back to the wall against the Axis in the West and is thus presumably not in a position to spare

much strength for his engagement in the East. Next comes the United States. That will be surely a tough proposition for Japan and Tokyo will have to think thrice before throwing the gauntlet to Washington. But the Japanese Government and statesmen are again and again pleading that they have no quarrel with America—for the present! They will go to any length to buy the neutrality of the United States and presumably they entertain the belief that they can pull off that deal.

True, the United States Administration has lately adopted a firm policy towards Japan and the imposition of certain trade sanctions proves that President Roosevelt is likely to stand no nonsense from Nippon. But will America actively join the war if, suppose, Japan scrupulously avoids any hostile entanglement towards the former and confines her offensive only against Britain? If, that is to say, the onus of proclaiming a state of war between the two countries is adroitly thrown upon Washington, will Roosevelt dare to deliver the ultimatum and can he in that case carry the country with him? American opinion may no longer be isolationist in the old sense but it is still definitely anti-war. It is obvious again that the burden of the war in the Pacific will fall mainly upon America. Leasing and lending will not be enough; the United States will have to do the actual fighting on land, sea and air. Will she do it?

The wily politicians in Tokyo must be asking themselves this very question. If at all they can provide themselves with a sufficiently reassuring answer, they may be trusted to launch their anti-British offensive without any strategic qualms.

*February 21, 1941*

During the last week there has been a non-aggression pact in the Balkans and a peace offer in the Far East.

If the former was designed to prevent hostilities from spreading to the South-East of Europe, the latter purports to be intended for pacification all the world over.

Japan's volunteering to act as a mediator between the European belligerents is like the Devil quoting scriptures. This olive branch, coming so quickly after the blood and iron thunders of the previous week, has created something of an anti-climax. The world was prepared for the latter but this sudden bland assumption of the pious peace-maker's role has come as a breath-taking stunt. It is futile to try to analyse the motive springs of the diplomatic somersaults of Tokyo. For many months now the warmongers and politicians of Japan have been vying with each other in their feats of sleight-of-hand. They have produced a number of rabbits from their hats, sent up countless *ballons d'essai*, and generally and systematically tried to make the present international confusion worse confounded. Is this all deliberately intended as a war of nerves? Or are the honourable Japanese statesmen just trying to soothe their own nerves, which have been so badly frayed over the Chinese incident?

Its prompt repudiation by all belligerents has nipped the peace plan in the bud. It has, however, served its purpose by giving a pseudo-moral satisfaction to Nippon. Now it can proceed with an easier conscience to its war preparations. In other words, the peace stunt was a propaganda weapon in the hands of the Japanese Government. Does not Hitler, too, protest on every occasion his most peaceful intentions? The civilised wolf must always convince himself, if not the world, that it was the lamb who was about to pounce upon him and that he had to act in sheer self-defence. It is necessary to stress this aspect of the problem here. Those who consider that Japan is about to beat a precipitate retreat under the cover of the olive branch are surely deceiving themselves. Britain's resolute preparations in the Malaya Penin-

sula and the outspoken pronouncements of the United States must not have failed to impress Japan but they will hardly deter her. She is too deeply committed to her policy of aggression to withdraw at the present stage.

It is characteristic of Japanese diplomacy that even while Mr. Matsuoka was posing himself as an emissary of world peace, huge contingents of Japanese troops were speeding on their way to Hainan, which is being prepared as the chief base for the offensive in the South. Japanese destroyers are also on a "courtesy visit" to Thailand, while the Japanese Air Force has already established its forward base in Indo-China. All this provides a truer index of Japanese intentions than the peace mission. She is also furiously wooing the Soviet and the indications are that the Soviet is not as undisposed to enter into at least a trade pact with Japan as she was some months ago. The incidents connected with the Chinese Fourth Route (Communist) Army are said to have riled Russia considerably and just by way of giving a mild snub to Martial Chiang Kai-Shek, Stalin may pull off some sort of deal with Tokyo—taking good care to barter more satisfaction than substance.

A war in the Far East will in that case be a distinct and imminent possibility. The Washington forecast that Japan will make some decisive move within a month is thus not too fanciful. Fortunately, the United States, which is always very sensitive about developments in the Far East, has already adopted a firm attitude to meet the Japanese menace. She is intimately co-operating with Britain and the Dutch East Indies for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Pacific, and the news that large numbers of American planes as well as pilots are being rushed to Singapore and Batavia will surely not be lost upon Nippon. If the democracies are able to assemble an overwhelming force in the Far East, the realistic rulers of Japan may yet decide to hold their hand.

*February 28, 1941*

I do not ordinarily hand bouquets to anybody in these columns but I feel like making an exception in favour of Mr. Eden. The visit of the British Foreign Minister to Turkey was the big news of the last week—big, not only to Britain and her Allies but also—and more so—to Britain's enemies. The world has been too long accustomed to be aguessing whither Ribbentrop would journey next or what Hitler would threaten in his coming Beer-hall speech. But the British Foreign Office seemed singularly incapable of any surprise move.

British diplomacy was being all along conducted with the decorum and leisureliness of Victorian days. Mr. Eden's predecessor was a most conscientious person and it is said that he used to spend sixteen hours a day in his chair at the Whitehall. But Lord Halifax lacked imagination, lacked initiative and—worst of all—he lacked adaptability. Like his late Chief, Neville Chamberlain, he was a representative of the old order, of what the dictators gibe as plutocracy. Both of them were tarred with the Munich brush and it is significant that the only European capital which Lord Halifax visited as a Foreign Minister was—Berlin! Those were the days when the Fuehrer was the idol of the Cliveden set and appeasement was the totem which the British ruling class worshipped.

One remembers those hectic two years before the war when the Halifax-Chamberlain-Daladier diplomacy believed in feeding the Nazi tiger. One remembers with a tragic thought those endless and fruitless Anglo-Soviet negotiations during the first half of 1939. Again and again was Halifax begged on bended knees to visit Moscow and talk with Stalin face to face instead of sending chits to him through an office boy. But the old school-tie, the snobbery of British aristocracy, the nationalist-imperialist-big-business-and-privilege mentality, the sheer hatred for all what the

Soviet stands for, blocked Halifax's way to what has developed into the diplomatic Mecca of Europe. Ribbentrop was quick to seize the blind spot of British diplomacy and he brought off a most brilliant coup in the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact of August, 1939.

It was a good thing for Britain and her Allies, therefore, when Lord Halifax was, as the phrase goes, "kicked upstairs", to Washington. It was better still when Mr. Anthony Eden, his predecessor, became his successor also. It was a personal triumph for Mr. Eden but it was something much more than that. It meant that the windows of Whitehall would be opened to sunshine and air. It would become more a chancellery of Britain than a chapel for Britain's Foreign Minister. Eden, too, is a Tory. He, too, sports the old school tie. He, too, belongs to Britain's blue aristocracy. But he has proved himself something of an *enfant terrible* of the Tories. He has shown that his convictions are not based only on his lands and debentures. He stood up to men like the blundering Baldwin and the sneering Chamberlain even though it meant—for all he knew in those days—the bar sinister to his political future.

So it was naturally expected that Eden would follow a more realistic, a more positive and a more dynamic if not decisive foreign policy, that he would not allow his class prejudices to come in the way of his diplomatic pursuits. And it is characteristic of Anthony Eden that no sooner did he take charge of the Foreign Office and re-establish his old contacts than he made a beeline for what is at present the centre of European gravity—the Balkans. When the news of Eden's visit to the Middle East was broadcast last week, it created considerable surprise—and lively expectations. The developments that followed Eden's last visit to General Wavell—he was the War Minister then—were too fresh in memory for the significance of the present one to be lost. Observers looked for-

ward to a new offensive being opened in the near future: Where? Everybody wondered.

But when it was learnt at the beginning of this week that Mr. Eden and General Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had proceeded from Cairo to Ankara, instead of returning to London, it created something of a sensation, a virtual consternation at any rate among the Balkan capitals. It was not merely a decisive gesture—even an honour—to Turkey, Britain's foe in the last and her staunch ally in the present war. It was a welcome diplomatic departure for Britain. What the outcome of the present visit will be it is too early to say. Too early exactly because it has been perhaps paid too late! That is surely not Eden's fault. He is the heir to the Halifax legacy. To-day the Balkans are all but swallowed by the Nazi python. Hungary has become a satellite; Rumania is occupied; Bulgaria has been penetrated; and Yugoslavia is being threatened.

The strategic rot is thus too complete for even a British Foreign Minister to stop it. At best Mr. Eden can succeed in making Turkey more firm and unyielding. But one can visualise what fruitful results would have followed such a visit, say, six months ago or even two when the gallant resistance of the Greeks had suddenly put a new complexion on the Balkan situation. Besides, Eden would not have been half so myopic as his predecessor to believe that the *status quo* in the Balkans could be maintained without not merely the goodwill but the active assistance of the Soviet. A Balkan Pact supported by the Soviet and guaranteed by Britain would have peremptorily checked the Nazi drive either to the East or the South. The Soviet was the lynchpin of Balkan stability. With it remaining lukewarm to subsequent developments—after occupying Bessarabia!—it practically offered the Balkans to Hitler on a silver platter. No amount of long-range diplomacy from London could prevent the Nazis gra-

dually establishing themselves in the South-East of Europe.

In this connection, it is most interesting to find that Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador to Moscow, is flying to Ankara to meet his new Chief. It would be more interesting still if the Chief accompanies Cripps to the Kremlin. What he has done once, surely he can do again. Such a gesture would certainly mollify Stalin the Sphinx and perhaps open a new chapter in Anglo-Soviet relations. Sir Stafford Cripps, in spite of his leftist past, has so far not succeeded in doing that.

The rub, they say, lies in the Baltic States, which the Soviet has grabbed in the best Nazi style. This part of Soviet history does not obviously bear too much probing and *realpolitik* demands that one, who desires the goodwill of the aggressor, should turn a blind eye towards that. After all every nation is full of such skeletons in its cupboard and we look askance at the Soviet not because it has done anything particularly heinous but simply because what it has done is too blatantly imperialist to go well with the socialist ideology. After having burnt its fingers badly over the Finland fiasco, the British Government is naturally anxious not to get its corns trod upon in the Baltic business. Even Halifax thought diplomatic discretion to be the better part of political piety and he went to the length of granting *de facto* recognition to the Soviet's occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

More significant than this is the projected trade agreement between the Soviet and Japan. It is highly amazing that all the protracted and historic differences between the two countries should have been straightened out just when Japan is threatening a spring offensive in the East to synchronise with that of her Axis Partner's in the West. The moral of what one may call the long arm of coincidence is plain for the world to see. I am more interested in the

talks between Mr. Eden and Sir Stafford Cripps than in those between the British and Turkish Foreign Ministers. Will those two persons—one, the Rightist Radical and the other, a Radical who has gone Right—succeed in devising some formula to wean Stalin from his pro-Axis tendencies, if not to placate him into a pro-British attitude? They have to fight not only the wiles of the Nazis but the appeasement aftermath in the British Foreign Office itself. What a distant day it seems now when Mr. Eden journeyed to Moscow and was warmly feted and feasted by Comrade Stalin! If the former succeeds in living down the legacy of the last five years and to steer the Anglo-Soviet relations back to what appears to-day as the haven of 1935, he will have rendered a signal service to Britain.

March 7, 1941

History has repeated itself and Bulgaria has once again aligned itself with Germany. The happiest man to-day is ex-King Ferdinand, who has come out of his obscure retreat in Germany, to justify his conduct in the last war by the latest developments in the present one! There was unfortunately no other course left to Bulgaria but to sign on the Axis' dotted line after it was virtually left to its fate by the Soviet. The Turco-Bulgar Pact created eleventh-hour hopes two weeks ago, but it has proved to be the dying flicker of Bulgarian independence. Now Bulgaria is for all purposes an occupied country—an enemy territory. Field-Marshal List, the German Army Commander, and not King Boris is the *de facto* ruler at Sofia.

One more Balkan bastion has fallen down, thanks to the Nazi Trojan Horses. The Bulgarians at large are pronounced Russophiles. The racial and cultural ties with the Soviet are strong and the hard-pressed Bulgarian peasant would have preferred to cast his lot with Big Brother Ivan than with the haughty Teu-

tons, who cleared the country of all its food-stuffs during the Great War and are sure to do it again. But the Bulgarian Army has been always subservient to the Reich. Many of its officers were trained in the German military academies and most of its equipment also comes from Germany. The higher ranks are said to be full of Quislings and Antonescus. The Bulgarian press, too, sold itself to the Axis long ago and it was taking its orders from Herr Laufer, the Nazi Press Attaché to the German Legation, for the last many months.

Again, even if the Bulgarian hearts are in Russia, their stomachs are in Germany. Almost half of her trade is with that country and that, too, on the basis of barter. Bulgaria is a poor country and it was not possible to extricate itself from the trade tentacles of the Nazis. Besides, during the last few months there has been such an influx of Nazi tourists, experts, technicians and advisers that it would have amounted almost to a miracle if Bulgaria had managed to remain free much longer. There are good grounds to believe, however, that the actual entry of Bulgaria into the New Order was hastened by the visit of Mr. Eden to Ankara. It would have suited the Nazis to continue the international suspense and confusion about Bulgaria's actual situation *vis-a-vis* the Axis as long as possible. The Sofia correspondents of British papers were wiring "Not Yet" until almost the actual day of Bulgaria's signing of the Three-Power-Pact on March 1.

The presence of Britain's Foreign Minister and Chief of General Staff in Ankara seems, however, to have sent up the wind of the Nazis and they hastily staged the diplomatic drama in the Belvedere Palace of Vienna where all the Nazi big guns were present. It was probably apprehended that the new energetic policy of Mr. Eden would create fresh difficulties for the Nazis in the Balkans and that is probably why Ribbentrop seized time by the forelock. M. Filoff,

the Bulgarian Prime Minister, however, dropped a heavy brick in the Belvedere Palace, the echoes of whose fall were instantly heard from the Kremlin. M. Filoff gratuitously observed in his speech after signing the Pact that his country will continue her traditional friendly relations with the Soviet and that the Pact was intended to be an instrument of permanent peace. This statement was naturally interpreted all the world over as meaning that the Soviet had given its direct or indirect blessing to the Pact.

The Moscow Radio promptly protested against this misrepresentation of the Soviet position and the frequency and vehemence with which it has done so created the major sensation of the last week. The world was almost taken aback by the outspoken denunciation of the Bulgarian action, though it amounted to no more than slamming the stable door with a big bang after the Trojan Horse had romped in—to coin a new metaphor. If Stalin really wanted to keep the Nazis out of Bulgaria, he could have easily done so long ago. The Bulgarian peasantry would have welcomed the Soviet with open arms, as the lesser of the two evils. A British journalist, who toured the country some months ago, noted that 18 out of 20 well-informed Bulgarians, whom he asked whether Bulgaria would resist open or disguised Russian violation of Bulgaria neutrality, answered "No".

This represents the extreme step. But even short of that, the Balkan nations would have been able to maintain their solidarity and independence had the Soviet given a decisive lead in good time. But Stalin, after swallowing Bessarabia, showed as if he had little interest left in the future of the Danubian countries. He remained unconcerned while the German grip on Rumania was being gradually tightened. He gave no diplomatic support to Bulgarian Ministers in the talks that have been going on for so long. Not only that but his sphinx-like policy has had a constricting effect even upon Turkey who has consistently

and strongly championed the cause of Balkan integrity. The Moscow broadcasts, therefore, are no more than pious laments over an accomplished fact. Nor is there any knowing whether the Soviet will follow up its denunciation to its logical conclusion.

It is a fruitless task, however, to try to unravel the tangled skein of Soviet diplomacy. The fact remains that, with the Nazi occupation of Bulgaria, not only are the integrity of Greece and the safety of Turkey imperilled, but even the strategic security of the Soviet itself is very much menaced. If the Nazis so desire they can bottle up Russian shipping in the Black Sea and even cast an ominous glance at the distant oil-wells of Baku. The German battalions have already taken their posts on the Turco-Bulgarian frontier, most of which is mountainous and difficult terrain with the advantage in favour of the defenders. The occupation of the two ports, Varna and Constanza, provides the Nazis with excellent bases for their submarines. Again the Aegean Sea is now within bombing range of the Luftwaffe, which will have its effect upon British help to her Ally.

The fact that Turkey is thus encircled on three sides will have little effect upon Turkish policy or morale. On the other hand it may further harden her resolve to fight for her independence. Nor need one fear that there is any imminent danger to Turkey from Germany. The Nazis are past masters of diplomacy and the fact that Hitler sent a special message to President Ineunu just as his legions were marching into Bulgaria shows that he has no belligerent intentions towards Turkey—as yet. What that message was, nobody knows but it must have conveyed a most solemn assurance of the Fuehrer's friendship for Germany's ally in the last war. No Nazi fireworks need therefore be expected for the present against Turkey.

The main threat is aimed at Greece, which has inflicted such crushing defeats upon the junior Axis partner. And the threat appears to be very real and

very imminent. "Solid miles of mechanized material" are being rushed to the Greek border and a large force will soon be assembled to overwhelm the valiant Greeks by sheer weight of numbers. Hitler may try his usual technique of overawing his enemy into "peaceful" surrender but the Greeks can be trusted to have a word for it!

At the moment of writing, it is amusing to note, both Germany and Greece are on friendly terms (in the diplomatic sense), though Berlin rather sententiously informed Athens the other day that it does not approve of the attitude of the latter! This is tantamount to the wolf's opening salutation to the lamb and the former's tone is bound to grow more truculent and aggressive. The Greek David has so long triumphed over the Italian Goliath; but he has little chances against the Nazi Moloch. That is a fact comprehended in Greece as well as London and it was a good move, therefore, that Mr. Eden and King George had a free exchange of views last week. While Greece is not in a position to take on such an additional mighty foe single-handed, the difficulties of assembling a British expeditionary force of sufficient magnitude and strength to oppose the Nazi hordes are also obvious. The Balkans, and with them most of Europe, will soon have thus passed under the shadow of the Swastika. Only the imperturbable Britain and the unpredictable Soviet remain to challenge the Nazi might and to uphold the freedom of the continent.

## BATTLE OF ATLANTIC

*Let us say to the democracies: "We Americans are utterly concerned in your defence of freedom. We are putting forth our energies, our resources and our organizing powers to give you the strength to regain and maintain a free world. We shall send you in ever increasing numbers ships, planes, tanks, guns. This is our purpose and our pledge."*

—Franklin Roosevelt

March 14, 1941

WHILE the attention of the world is naturally centred on Salonika, where the Nazi Blitzkrieg against Greece is expected to open any minute, and on Yugoslavia, which is being sedulously persuaded and pressed to walk into the Axis parlour, the long-advertised spring campaign seems to have already begun elsewhere on the seas and in the skies.

It is not a one-sided offensive either; for if the German submarines have registered a new high record for 1941 in their campaign against the British Mercantile Marine, the British air force on its part has given a record hammering to Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen on the last full moon night. This is said to have been the biggest raid launched by the R.A.F. up-to-date though the details of the damage inflicted are not available at the time of writing. The psychological results are, however, obvious and more than one American eye-witness in Germany has testified to the great blow to Nazi morale given by British bombing of the German capital and other key towns. The British War Cabinet has persistently refused to indulge in civilian bombing by way of reprisal, but it may be expected that, with the quickening tempo of hostilities, the German people will be getting a bigger and more frequent dose of their own medicine.

Hitler's threat of the intensification of the U-Boat offensive was made good with the sinking of 29 ships

totalling 148,038 tons for the week ending March 2. This is more than double of the weekly average and the third highest figure of the present war. During the last two months particularly, the sinkings had marked a new low and their sudden shooting up has naturally caused a certain amount of apprehension as instanced in the speech delivered by Mr. Tom Williams, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture. Whether this rise is fortuitous or it will be sustained at such a high figure remains to be seen. There seems to be no reason, however, for being unduly pessimistic about Britain's shipping position even if Hitler executes all his dire threats. He is strategically far better situated than in the last war to let loose his underwater marauders on the shipping lanes of Britain, while the latter's position is relatively far worse owing to Eire's unyielding neutrality. The Royal Navy, moreover, has to discharge the duties which were undertaken by five allied navies in the last war and in 1914 Britain had a greater merchant tonnage at her disposal than in 1939.

In spite of all those drawbacks and handicaps, Britain has not done half so badly as was feared. As Sir Arthur Salter pointed out some time ago, 97 per cent of Britain's original tonnage is still afloat. The rate of replacement, too, is bound to quicken as the Admiralty has recently taken over under its command all the ship-building yards in Britain and co-ordinated and standardised the construction programme. Add to this the enormous help that is bound to come from the United States now that the Lease and Lend Bill has passed on the statute-book. Even if we take for granted that the sinking rate, too, may be correspondingly worse, still the relative balance is confidently expected to be in Britain's favour.

During 1940 British shipping losses amounted to 3,591,000 tons or just over a half of the losses in 1917. This figure is significant for, in most ways, 1940 proved an extremely disastrous year for Britain. Now

not only has Britain turned the corner but her vast potential power is also becoming rapidly and increasingly effective. Hitler may have a big construction programme of U and E boats under way but it is authoritatively pointed out that the maximum number of submarines he can have at command any time cannot exceed 150 at the most. The training of the U-Boat crew is a most arduous and highly technical job and even if it were possible to produce the vessels in large numbers, the problem of its personnel will still have to be solved. Even if, therefore, the opening weeks of the spring offensive are marked by a steep rise in sinkings—as they well may—the new menace will be brought under control sooner rather than later. Stronger escorts, the long arm of the Coastal Air Command and the accelerating rate of replacements will all help in maintaining Britain's mastery of the seas.

While Germany is returning from its exploded faith in the new Luftwaffe to a concentrated campaign of the old submarine weapon, Britain, while retaining its control over the seas, is making a determined bid to wrest the supremacy of the skies from Germany. This is, perhaps, the most heartening feature of the present phase of the war and one which is likely to prove decisive in the future fortunes of the armageddon. Introducing the Air Force estimates in the House of Commons last Tuesday, Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Air Minister, gave a very encouraging review of his custodianship of Britain's youngest yet most powerful service. In the past few months, said the Air Minister, in two theatres of war, the R.A.F. (mainly fighter squadrons) had destroyed some 4,250 German and 700 Italian aircraft in combat for fewer than 1,800 British aircraft. More than the aggregate destruction, the ratio of British to German losses is significant. And the figures of the loss of personnel are still more flattering to Britain, as many of the pilots safely baled out from their damaged machines

during the historic Battle of Britain. The R.A.F. undoubtedly enjoys not only technical but also moral superiority over the Luftwaffe, even though the latter had an early start over its rival both in training and production.

If Britain's air strength is formidable to-day, it will be still more imposing as "the choicest fruits of American design and craftsmanship" began to be flown over the Atlantic in bigger and bigger numbers. Sir Archibald named a few new bomber and fighter types which have been lately put into service and have given great satisfaction. American aid will be valuable not merely in numbers but also in technical efficiency. There is nothing, for example, to compare with the huge flying fortresses of the United States and if a sufficient number of them can be made available to Britain in good time, they will prove of inestimable advantage in the ensuing spring-krieg.

As in the seas, so also in the air, Germany is far better strategically placed in the present war than in the last. While her own cities are well protected in the rear, her advance aerodromes and bases are situated all along the western seaboard of Europe. This handicap has, however, not prevented Britain from striking whenever and wherever possible. Since last August Britain has had little respite in the air war and she has suffered heavily indeed. But the following figures tell their own tale:—British bombers had made 280 raids on aerodromes and seaplane bases, 300 on docks and shipping, 470 on railways and communications, 630 on industrial targets, all in Germany, apart from their many very heavy raids on objectives in the occupied territory. The Luftwaffe has merely to fly over the Channel to bomb Britain, while the R.A.F. has huge distances to travel to put into effect its master bombing plan. The following places have been frequently visited, Kalowice 1,500 miles from the English coast, Danzig 1,440, Stettin

1,100, Vienna 1,450, Genoa 1,200 and Turin 1,150. That is a fine record and it will be bettered still very soon.

Ever since German troops marched into Bulgaria, rumours of an ultimatum to Greece have been rife. Every day was expected to be *The Day* but until the time of writing, the threatened sweep on Salonika has not materialised. It is not from any conscientious scruples on Hitler's part but probably because he is anxious first to liquidate Yugoslavia and neutralise Turkey that he is deferring his attack on Greece. Yugoslavia has struck to her strict neutrality and unlike in the other Balkan countries which Germany has already occupied, the morale of the people is exceptionally high. The most that the Yugoslavian Government can manage to do, however, is to remain neutral for the time being. If they won't join the Nazis, neither are they in a position to bar their way to the South. It would have been different had there been a mutual pact of help between all the Balkan nations before the Germans entered Rumania. United in time they could have maintained the integrity of all; now they are doomed to go under the Nazi Juggernaut one by one. Yugoslavia's attitude is thus not going to deflect Hitler from his chosen path. He will strike Greece whenever it suits his purpose. But after that what? Extricating Mussolini from the Albanian bog is only a very minor part of Hitler's strategy. Had it been only that, he could have as well sent his troops through Italy proper to fight on the Albanian front.

No. Hitler is playing for different and higher stakes. They are nothing short of a revised version of the old Berlin-Baghdad dream of Bismarck and the Kaiser. His eye is not on the South but on the East and its cynosure seems to be Suez. Instead of marching straight through Istanbul and thus having to fight Turkey, Hitler is adroitly planning to turn Turkey's flank, to isolate her from her British ally by establishing mastery over the Aegean Sea, and finally to march

through Syria, Palestine on to Suez. He will have killed several birds by one strategic stone. This is undoubtedly a grandiose plan and, as usual, Hitler is taking every step with the utmost caution. So far he has had all his own way in the Balkans and he will not mind spending a few more days in negotiating with Yugoslavia and Turkey. Unfortunately for him, every day of delay means so much further collapse of his junior partner—and strengthening of Britain. The latest Italian counter-offensive in Albania under the Duce's personal supervision has ended in one more disaster and perhaps that may hasten Germany's invasion of Greece and the consequent opening of a new phase of war.

*March 21, 1941*

Though during the week ending March 9, the British and Allied shipping losses fell almost by one-third of the high figure of the previous week, they are still yet far above the average of the last three months. The loss of a hundred thousand tons necessarily gives considerable cause for anxiety.

How critical the situation is, can be seen from the fact that the Battle of the Atlantic was the main theme of the speech delivered by Mr. Churchill at the Pilgrims' Luncheon last Tuesday. It was significant that Mr. John Winant, the new United States Ambassador, also chose that occasion for delivering his first public speech in his official capacity. In the words of Mr. Churchill, the Battle of the Atlantic is one of the most momentous ever fought in all the annals of war. It is going to mark one of the grand turning points in world's history. On the outcome of the Battle of the Atlantic depends the future of the war and the fate of the Allies—and of the Totalitarian Powers as well.

Hitler knows this too well and that is why he has publicly vowed to wage an unrelenting submarine

campaign on the British Mercantile Marine. This is not only his reply to Britain's blockade of the continent but also his only hope left of winning the war—through starving the British Isles. It is significant that the Luftwaffe is now playing a secondary role to the submarine flotilla. No more does one hear the old boast of Goering that his airmen will bomb Britain out of existence. No doubt even now the bombing attacks are taking place more or less severely. But they are directed not so much against the metropolis of the Empire or the industrial centres of Britain: now it is chiefly the western ports which are receiving the main attention of the Luftwaffe.

During the last few days Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool—all have received heavy battering. The aim is obvious: not only will the ships be attacked but it will also be made as difficult as possible for them to dock and unload their precious cargo. We must be prepared to see more severe and systematic destruction wrought upon the ports in days to come. How is Britain meeting the challenge to her vital life lines, the serious nature of which has long since been apparent? Mr. Churchill revealed in his speech that not only German submarines but a few battle-cruisers as well are at large in the Atlantic ready to pounce upon lonely British merchantmen. To search for them in the infinite expanse of the waters is much worse than even the proverbial searching for the needle in the haystack. Results can never be guaranteed, howsoever diligent and comprehensive the effort.

With the greyhounds of the ocean occupied completely in escorting the convoys, the duty of tracking, spotting and, if possible, destroying the Nazi marauders is devolving more and more on the Coastal Air Command. Their air hawks fly hundreds of miles every day in the lonely vigils over the sea but the occasions when luck comes their way are few and far between. They can look to the future with growing confidence, however. In the first place the new

machines that are coming from the United States can fly farther and can also remain in the air for a longer period. Secondly, the arrival of the spring means the lengthening of the daylight hours which is as good for the British air sentinels as it will prove bad for the Nazi underwater marauders. Britain has already established her mastery of the skies during the day in the Battle of London and it will be further conclusively demonstrated in the Battle of the Atlantic.

More encouraging than all this is the announcement made by Col. Knox, the United States Naval Secretary, that their first aid to Britain will be the supply of light surface vessels such as submarine chasers, motor torpedo boats and other torpedo boats of the "mosquito" types. Those vessels do not merely have a negative nuisance value as their classification may imply. They are highly useful in guarding the coastline of Britain and the more Britain has of them the more she can spare her own heavier units for escort purposes over the high seas. Col. Knox also revealed that Britain has asked for the use of the United States navy yards, though no decision has yet been arrived at on this issue. Those yards are presumably needed not merely for repairing and reconditioning purposes but also for new constructions. Apart from the terrific pressure on Britain's own shipping yards, there will be further dislocation owing to their being now chosen for bombing targets. The lease of a few yards on the other side of the Atlantic will thus be of the greatest help to Britain at this juncture.

The United States has verily reached such a stage that she will be drawn in the vortex of war in spite of her own sincere pacific convictions; the latest Gallup poll significantly reveals that even to-day there are not more than 17 per cent Americans who favour going to war. It would be the uttermost height of folly and futility to ship billions of dollars worth of American food-stuffs, munitions and armaments to Britain, only to see them going to the bottom of the

ocean at the hands of the Nazis. In the name of sanity alone, the United States will have to assure itself that its help reaches the shores of Britain. And if Britain is, unfortunately, not in a position to guarantee a safe passage for American aid, then, obviously, the job must be done by the United States itself and d—d the consequences! An American columnist hit the nail on the head when he wrote "All that is needed now is an episode. One always comes in times like this. An American ship will be attacked or sunk or something and then we will all swing into action, and it won't be a study in slow motion!" Rather blatant those words, but pregnant.

It is, however, a moot point whether Hitler will not himself now take the initiative in breaking off diplomatic relations with the United States. He has so far shown exemplary patience but now that America is committed in such an unmistakable manner to help Britain in defeating Germany, it remains to be seen whether the Fuehrer will not follow the example of the Kaiser in the last war and provoke the United States into active belligerency. The latest straws in the wind show that such a possibility is not too remote and, after all, the Nazis have always believed in striking first. The United States may be neutral in international law but it is certainly an open partner of Britain as far as the Battle of the Atlantic is concerned. And that battle, by Churchill's own confession, is a decisive phase, a turning point in the war.

*March 28, 1941*

March 27, 1941, will go down as a historic date in the annals of World War II.

In the early hours of morning that day a most dramatic revolution took place in the capital of Yugoslavia, when the Boy King Peter—yet six months on the right side of 18—took over the reins of his coun-

try's administration from the Council of Regency headed by his uncle Prince Paul. Behind the Boy King stands a group of army officers and General Richard Simovitch is the real author of the *coup d'etat*.

The late Prime Minister M. Tsvetkovitch, who had signed on the dotted line and surrendered the freedom of his country to the Nazis barely 36 hours ago at Vienna, and his colleagues are already under arrest and Prince Paul is reported to have fled the country. The new Cabinet includes the representatives of all the leading Serb, Croat and Slovene parties and all the former Ministers who were opposed to the Axis Pact or had resigned on that issue have taken over their portfolios again. As far as one can see, the new Government is not merely a junta but is broadbased on the support of the people. And therein lies its real strength and the hope for the future of Yugoslavia. This dramatic turn of events could have been hardly foreseen anywhere outside Yugoslavia, especially after the actual signing of the Axis Pact on Tuesday last. To all appearance, Yugoslavia's doom was finally sealed and the Nazis are after all past masters in taking an ell after having been given an inch.

Though the new agreement did not give them any authority or scope to interfere in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia, the disorders which had followed the signature of the Pact in Belgrade and elsewhere would have provided them with a capital excuse for sending troops in the country to maintain peace and order (as they did in Rumania and Bulgaria) and thus gradually occupying it forcibly. It was a case of touch and go. Another day or two and it would have been too late. The very haste with which the Vienna Agreement was signed shows how uneasy the Germans were about it. They were fully aware of the keen resentment caused in Yugoslavia by the decision of the Tsvetkovitch ministry to walk into the Axis parlour. News of spontaneous uprisings was coming from various quarters and the Belgrade correspondent of

the *New York Times* hinted that the Yugoslav Government were already "disintegrating under a wave of public anger."

The Serbs are traditional foes of Germany. It was in Sarajevo in Serbia that the spark was kindled which set Europe on fire in 1914. "The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" came to birth as a result of the Versailles Peace Conference. The constitution was abolished, however, and the new name Yugoslavia was given to the country in 1929. The murder of King Alexander at Marseilles in 1934 was a great tragedy for the young nation and since then the Nazis have been devoting considerable attention to that country and trying their best to exploit the internecine differences. Under Dr. Stoyadinovitch, Yugoslavia has been gradually passing since 1935 into the Nazi orbit. There is a strong minority of Germans and the Croatians have always complained that they were left in the cold. Economically, the country is heavily dependent upon the Axis powers particularly since the war began. Three-quarters of her imports come and more than one-half of her exports go to the Axis and the Axis-occupied countries. Strategically the country is now encircled on three sides by the Nazis. The Regency Government was thus in a sense bowing to the inevitable when it decided to join the Axis. Resistance from their viewpoint was pretty hopeless and their only anxiety was to secure the best possible terms. This they apparently succeeded in doing and Ribbentrop gave an assurance in as many words that no German troops would pass through Yugoslavia. But how long would such a scrap of paper have been honoured?

Fortunately, that question need not worry the Yugoslavian people at all now. For all practical purposes, though the coup d'etat is strictly an internal affair of the country and though the new Government will be extremely cautious in outlining its foreign policy, the country has now aligned itself with the

democracies. It will not go out of its way in immediately breaking off diplomatic relations with the Reich but the meaning of the imprisonment of the signatories of the Axis Pact is plain as a pikestaff. The coup represents a major diplomatic defeat for Hitler and extremely galling by the way it has come. It must be all the more painful considering that M. Matsuoka is at present in Berlin. This Balkan setback will carry its own lesson for him, howsoever courteous and careful he may be not to rub it in his hosts.

Britain, it is needless to say, will heartily welcome this great opportunity to have a crack at the Nazis. Mr. Churchill has already utilised the first occasion to promise full aid to the new regime for the maintenance of Yugoslavia's independence. Even the United States has lost no time in giving a similar assurance through their Ambassador in Belgrade, the Lease and Lend Act coming in very handy at this juncture. As for the Greeks, the coup is a veritable godsend to them and no wonder Athens is celebrating the event as rapturously as Belgrade itself. This does not mean that everything is over with the Nazis in the Balkans bar the shouting. Far from it indeed. For the situation is in a sense more imminently menacing than before. The Nazis will naturally not allow grass to grow under their feet. They will desire to have their revenge upon Yugoslavia before it goes over completely into the arms of their enemy, Britain.

By a happy coincidence the 27th of March also marked the fall of Keren, which grimly resisted the British attack for almost two months. The defenders are entitled to full marks for their valour, resourcefulness and sheer tenacity. Never have the Italians fought better. But the war for them was lost before ever it began! Italy's African Empire is now like a cut flower in a vase. It is bound to wilt and die. It is only a question of days.

*April 4, 1941*

The evacuation of Benghazi by the British forces on Thursday last is easily the most important news of the week. It is, indeed, a first class sensation.

After the occupation of that town by General Wavell's Army of the Nile on February 6, the Battle of the Western Desert was virtually considered to have reached a victorious conclusion. Though forward British units had advanced as far as El-Agheila, a coastal town about 140 miles south of Benghazi, it was understood that no attempts would be made to march upon Tripoli. Lt-General Wilson took over command of Cyrenaica as Military Governor and Benghazi, a port with a population of 35,000, continued to be the capital of the occupied province. Tripolitana, the other half of Libya, was to be left to itself for the time being and the three or four hundred miles of waterless desert which separated the two provinces were considered to provide a sufficient safeguard against a counter-offensive by Marshal Graziani, who has now been superseded by General Garibaldi.

Interest since then has naturally shifted to East Africa where also the tempo of British successes has been well maintained. Little news came from Cyrenaica and that, too, was more of civil than military import, referring mostly to the plight of Italian colonists settled round about Benghazi. Most of us had almost rolled up our maps of Libya. It was known that the Germans had sent a few air squadrons and armoured units to Libya to help the Italians. The former were reported to have participated in the final stages of the battle and one could indirectly gather that they have been bombing Benghazi off and on since its occupation by the British. But it was generally believed that the Nazis could not—even if they would—send a sufficiently strong force to Africa. Britain's command of the Mediterranean was the big

factor to be taken into consideration in this connection. It is a fundamental military maxim that an army which ventures far beyond its base and cannot keep its line of communication open is doomed to extinction. The fate that has overtaken the Italians in Abyssinia is the latest and aptest illustration bearing out the truth of this dictum.

The Nazis have never disguised their desire to take a hand in the war in Africa. It was generally expected that after the fall of France last June they would participate in the projected Italian attack on Egypt. It was known that considerable pressure was then exerted on General Franco to allow a passage to Nazi troops through Spain and Morocco to Libya. Reports were rife that special detachments of the German army were being trained for tropical warfare. But, whether it was due to Franco's obduracy or to some other cause, the Nazis turned their attention first to the Balkans. In December started the lightning collapse of the Italian army in Libya which culminated in the surrender of Benghazi on February 6. The Mediterranean was becoming less and less of a *mare nostrum*. In view of all those rapid developments it was generally considered that the Nazi menace to Egypt was nipped in the bud. Even the British military authorities seem to have shared this belief.

Evidently this has proved rather a complacent view; for the sudden occupation of Benghazi by the Germans is far more of a surprise than the similar feat by the British two months ago. Then it was only the culminating episode of a brilliant campaign. Its capture was a foregone conclusion. Until one read it in cold print this morning, however, the news of the unhindered march of the combined Nazi and Italian troops from Tripoli to Benghazi over the hundreds of miles of desert would have been dismissed as a piece of Goebbel's propaganda. We were informed that occasional encounters took place between the

British and Nazi reconnaissance units in the No Man's Land. But every time the report was accompanied by a reassurance from General Headquarters that the situation was entirely in hand.

The first news of a brush with enemy armoured fighting units "believed to be German," which took place west of Agheila, came on the last day of February. That "belief" was justified during the next few days and a number of minor actions took place between the British and German mechanised units throughout March. The capture of that town by the Germans on the 25th of March represented their first major success in the desert warfare. But the evacuation of that remote outpost by the advance British units was considered as of not much strategic importance. The situation seems to have unexpectedly undergone some change for the worse during the last few days. The evacuation of Benghazi cannot certainly be dismissed lightly. It is a setback, as the *Reuter* message says. Its value is not merely propagandistic but tactical if not strategic. It must be remembered that the Germans are not accustomed to desert warfare and this initial gain has for them a great significance.

What is the strength of the German troops operating in Libya? It was reported to be three to four complete mechanized divisions with their own supporting air force. But obviously this is an exaggeration and those divisions are probably composite—that is to say, picked Blackshirt soldiers from the remnants of Graziani's beaten legions with the officers mainly, and the General Staff entirely German. Some of the mechanized equipment might have come from Germany but the rest must have been improvised in Tripoli itself. What matters, however, is not the immediate active strength of the attacking force but the potential on which it can draw. And it is here that the British are in an overwhelmingly strong position in the African continent. General

Wavell has now at his disposal the entire Imperial Army which was so long dispersed over a dozen widely scattered fronts. The East African campaign is now rapidly drawing to its victorious conclusion and the fall of Addis Ababa may be expected any day now, encircled as it is on all sides.

Even numerically, therefore, the odds are preponderatingly in favour of the British. The tables have been completely turned during the course of the last ten months and whatever reasons for dismay there would have been if the Nazis had made their appearance in Libya immediately after the collapse of France last June exist no longer. Mussolini has received a crushing blow in Africa as well as Albania and it is only the Gestapo at home and the Nazi armies abroad which are yet keeping the Fascist regime afloat. This intrusion of the Nazis in the Western Desert thus amounts to no more than a diversion in spite of all its sensational nature.

Britain's mastery of the seas spelt the doom of Germany's Empire in Africa in World War I. The same nemesis has well-nigh overtaken Italy in World War II. The eleventh-hour combined Nazi-Fascist attempt to stop the rot is not going to alter that inexorable denouement, even if it may succeed in delaying it a little. Not only that, but a commander as conscious of his strength and resources as General Wavell happily is to-day, would heartily welcome such a diversion. The deeper, the better for the final mopping up. The Victor of the Western Desert followed the same tactics with Marshal Graziani when he allowed him to penetrate right up to Sidi Barrani, though it was then a sort of Hobson's choice.

Why should the Nazis have staged the present diversion, knowing full well how disastrous it is bound to prove to them sooner rather than later? Is it because they hope to divert the attention of Britain from the Balkans, where the situation is radically altered owing to the *coup d'état* in Yugoslavia? That

seems to be the only sensible explanation of the attack on Benghazi. It is purposely devised as a sideshow to engross the attention and energies of the British G.H.Q. while the real blow is timed to fall somewhere else. Greece has been marked as a victim for long and now Yugoslavia, too, will have to pay the price for her dramatic checkmate to Hitler. His plan is to immobilise the victorious Army of the Nile in the Western Desert by his present diversion, while he launches his long-deferred Blitzkrieg in the Balkans.

April 11, 1941

Almost exactly a year after the invasion of Denmark and Norway, the mighty German war machine crashed into Greece and Yugoslavia in the early hours of Sunday, April 6. Another Spring-Krieg had begun.

There is a world of difference, however, between those two acts of vandalism, though the Nazi technique remains the same—powerful and perfect in its cold-blooded brutality. The invasion of Scandinavia on April 9, 1940, came as a surprise and succeeded like a miracle. Denmark was occupied like a python swallowing a rabbit while traitors handed Norway bound on a bier to Hitler. She was vanquished before she was struck. The attack on Greece on April 6, 1941, has been expected for months now, while it was a foregone conclusion that Yugoslavia would be visited with the direst retribution for that most audacious *coup d'état*, by which its prey was snatched from under the very paw of the tiger.

Greece and Yugoslavia, too, are no match for the mechanised Attila, the latter country especially having had hardly any time to recover from the shocks of the last month. But the very fact that in spite of their great inferiority in men and material, they are standing up gallantly to the Nazi hordes unlike the victims

of last April's aggression, is symptomatic of the change that has come over Europe during the last twelve months. It is a beacon of hope for the future. It need cause no surprise, much less alarm, that the Blitzkrieg has won initial success on all the Balkan fronts. Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, was butchered from the air no sooner war was declared, in spite of its being declared an open town long ago. It is to-day a city of dead men and demolished buildings and German armies are already reported on its outskirts.

The Yugoslavians are a heroic people and they are fighting against enormous odds as they did in the last war. They are being encircled on all sides and apart from Germany and Italy, the Balkan satellites of the Axis are also being instigated to fall upon their prostrate neighbour like a vulture. Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria are already making their revisionist demands and Hungary is executing them at the point of the bayonet. The Greeks, too, have been obliged to fall back upon their second line of defence. Salonika, the key port, fell at the first onslaught and there is some danger at the moment of writing that the Greek divisions in Macedonia are being entirely cut off from the main army. The Germans are also aiming to drive a wedge between the Yugoslavs and the Greeks and to effect a junction with the Italian arms in Albania. The position in the various theatres of the German thrust is thus distinctly menacing though (according to Yugoslav quarters in London) not desperate as yet. There are known to be considerable British troops in Greece under the command of General Wavell and their first contact with the enemy occurred only on Friday. The main brunt of attack is naturally falling upon the R.A.F. who have already inflicted enormous losses upon the advancing German columns.

On the same day on which the Germans marched upon Greece, Addis Ababa was occupied by the advance British forces. This was really a big surprise, though

it was overshadowed by the Balkan news that day. The decision of the Duke of Aosta to surrender the capital of Mussolini's late African Empire without a struggle was forced upon him by the large number of Italian civilians resident there and by the well-grounded fear that they would receive little mercy from their late victims. The flag of Emperor Haile Selassie proudly flutters once again over his palace in Addis Ababa—an event which even the greatest optimist could have hardly hoped for five years ago.

Two days after the capture of Addis Ababa, Massawa also surrendered after a show of fight, thus bringing to a victorious end the Eritrean campaign, which was conducted mainly by Indian troops. But this victory is not merely local. It had its reaction as far away as the U.S.A. where President Roosevelt promptly declared the Red Sea to be out of the combat zone. American ships can now land supplies directly in Egypt, which will have a bearing not only upon the fighting in the Western Desert but also in the Balkans. The end of the East African warfare—the remaining Italian forces may be left to be mopped up at convenience—fortunately coincides with the German Spring-krieg. The news from Cyrenaica is more disquieting than was at first believed: the Italo-German mechanized columns are said to be in the neighbourhood of Tobruk, where General Wavell is concentrating his defence.

Against the major developments in Libya and the Balkans, the *coup d'état* in Iraq appears to be a minor, domestic affair. The seizure of the Government by Rashid Ali and the subsequent dismissal by a unanimous vote of the Iraq Parliament of the former Regent Emir Abdul Illah may be domestic, but its significance cannot be lightly dismissed as minor. It must be viewed against the background of Nazi machinations and coinciding at a time when the Germans have begun their spring movement, its implications are not very reassuring. Rashid Ali is an army man and he

was dismissed from office on a previous occasion. He has promised to honour the international obligations of Iraq but it remains to be seen how such an assurance will be adhered to.

*April 18, 1941*

It would be foolish to minimise the gravity of the war situation. But it would be worse than foolish to exaggerate it either. I wrote those words eleven months ago when the Nazi mechanized hordes were rushing through the plains of northern France mercilessly crushing all opposition in their path. There is good reason to repeat them to-day.

During the last two weeks there has been a cataclysmic change in the situation in the Middle East and in the Balkans. The enemy is again on the borders of Egypt having made a record dash from Benghazi to Sollum within a week. This sudden turn of the tide in the Western Desert has somewhat eclipsed the brilliant victories of General Cunningham over the Duke of Aosta. The African Empire of Mussolini lies to-day shattered in the dust but the old threat to Suez has once again raised its ugly head.

In the Balkans the German Blitzkrieg which was so suddenly unleashed on April 6 has met with immediate success. The usual Nazi tactics of hurling masses of mechanized troops and overwhelming the opponent by sheer weight of numbers and metal has achieved for them one more victory. Yugoslavia, which (in the Churchillian phrase) found its soul less than a month ago when King Peter disowned the Vienna Pact, has been smashed by one fell blow. That country was caught unprepared and powerless to resist the Nazi might and when once a wedge was driven between it and its gallant Allies in Greece, its fate was virtually sealed.

In Greece a great battle is being waged over a wide front. The Anglo-Greek line stretches from Mount Olympus on the Gulf of Salonika to the Albanian hills on the Ionian Sea. The German pressure is being concentrated upon three points—at Grevena (north of Kalambaka), south of the Haliakmon River and west of Koritza. The Greek armies are retiring from Albania to take their positions on the new line of defence, so as to frustrate the plan of Field-Marshal List, the Nazi Commander, to cut the Allied forces in two if not three. Everything depends upon how long and how successfully the main lines of defence are held intact. Once the Nazi armoured units penetrate the main defence, they are past masters in spreading confusion and destruction behind the back of the defenders. The classic example of this strategy was seen at Sedan last May and the latest illustration is provided by the rapid and complete collapse of the Yugoslav army which was isolated, surrounded and vanquished piecemeal in different sectors.

The situation is thus admittedly serious on the Balkan front but one must not for that reason lose one's sense of proportion. Hitler has been preparing for this onslaught for the last six months with his usual thoroughness. His diplomacy gave him a bloodless victory over Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria and all those countries, besides supplying him with advance concentration centres for his armies and aerodromes for his air force and strategic terrain for launching the offensive, are serving as jackals to the Nazi lion. Yugoslavia was not so much beaten by the Nazis as betrayed by her neighbours, who are already feasting on her carcase.

The Nazis had assembled an overwhelming force in the Balkans before they pressed the Blitzkrieg button. Against Yugoslavia alone they had massed 38 divisions and those were rapidly increased to 60 when the Yugoslav army refused to knuckle under the first

onslaught. The Luftwaffe had a merry time during its diabolical bombing of Belgrade as that city was declared an open town and left mostly undefended. Even so nearly 300 German planes are reported to have been destroyed by the Yugoslavians during their shortlived though heroic resistance.

Not only were Greece and Yugoslavia no match to the German Goliath but it was also obvious to every observer that Britain could not send an expeditionary force anyway comparing, much less equalling, the Nazi forces. It must be noted again that while the Nazis have an unmolested and comparatively short overland line of communications to the theatre of operations, the shortest route from Great Britain to Salonika is 4,000 miles long and that, too, through submarine infested seas and vulnerable to air attack most of the way. The very fact that the British expeditionary force to the Balkans was drawn mostly from the victorious army in Libya is significant for more reasons than one.

The defeat of Greece will in no way count as a victory over Britain. It will be most deplorable, but in no way decisive to the future fortunes of war. This is true even if the Balkan Blitzkrieg is only the first step of Hitler in his drive to the East. He may soon try to coerce Turkey by diplomatic pressure into giving a free passage to the Near East. Or he may decide to strike through Syria thus isolating Turkey. The coup d'etat in Iraq cannot be lost sight of in this connection. But all this has no immediate bearing on the war situation. On the other hand, Libya is a more serious proposition to Britain than the Balkans. The latter is essentially a subsidiary show in which Britain is playing a secondary role. The main onus of resistance naturally falls upon Greece and British help will be effective only as long as Greece is able to hold her ground. The collapse of Greece, if it cannot be avoided at all, will only mean that Hitler is

master of the Balkans as he is already master of most of Europe to-day.

The case of Libya, or to be more exact now, of Egypt is, however, entirely different. There, the show is entirely British. The challenge to the Suez Canal is virtually a threatened grip on the windpipe of the British Empire. If Hitler is allowed to reach Suez, it will practically undo all the splendid victories that have been won in Africa by the Imperial Forces during the last four months. And the Anglo-German combat in the sands of Africa is thus going to be a most serious affair. In view of all those considerations one's eyes are more upon Egypt than upon Greece. A realist may be justified even in writing off the latter country if the relentless Nazi pressure continues at the present rate. But every inch of the Western Desert must be defended now at every and any cost. One cannot write off Egypt even by a stretch of imagination. That will be the virtual end of war.

I expressed a certain apprehension when Benghazi was captured by the Italo-German counter-offensive. The last two weeks have more than justified my worst fears then. But now when the advance Nazi units are knocking at the gates of Egypt, so to say, I feel that we have passed the worst of it. General Wavell must have by now taken full measure of the enemy and there are good grounds to hope that he will deal in due time with the Nazi forces in the same way in which he simply rolled back Graziani's army last December. The Nazis are tempted beyond their depth and howsoever strong they may be, the problem of supply and reinforcements will begin to weigh with them sooner rather than later. The fact that Tobruk is still being held by a British garrison is the most bright feature of the picture. The main British defences at Mersa Matruh are extremely formidable and the spearhead of the Nazi attack will be surely blunted there. The Imperial armies scattered in East Africa are now being rapidly assembled to defend

Egypt and one need not, therefore, at all take a pessimistic view of the future. On the contrary, as long as Tobruk is in British hands, I shall continue to expect a brilliant counterstroke on the part of the British.

Libya and the Balkans are, however, not the only two "black spots in the picture of the war" as Lord Halifax observed at New York the other day. For it seems clear that Hitler has opened an all-out offensive, which will be waged on every possible front with all the vigour and venom which he can put forth. To begin with, there is the Battle of the Atlantic, which is waxing fast and furious every passing day. Britain's shipping losses for the four weeks ending April 15, amounted to 394,000 tons which are pretty severe. We will have now to wait another month to assess how the sea struggle is going, owing to the decision of the British Government to publish the shipping losses monthly instead of weekly.

For the most part, therefore, we will be groping in the dark regarding the shipping losses. The most comforting aspect of the situation is, however, the fact that the United States as much as—if not more than—Britain is determined that the democracies will not lose the Battle of the Atlantic. The steps that are being taken by President Roosevelt to build "a vital bridge of ships" in order to send every possible aid to Britain give us excellent hope for the future. As far as this battle is concerned the United States is already up to its neck in it.

April 25, 1941

Speaking at the English-speaking Union at New York a few days ago, Lord Halifax described the present times as "the darkest days that mankind has known." The events of the last week amply bear out that grim foreboding.

While one must not judge too harshly the action of the Greek armies on the Epirus and Macedonian

fronts in capitulating last Tuesday on their own initiative and without the cognisance either of the Commander-in-Chief or the Greek Government, it cannot be gainsaid that this unconditional surrender has gravely jeopardised the position of the British Expeditionary Force. At the moment of writing—"a moment big with fate", to quote Lord Halifax again—the Imperial Army is holding with the loyal remnant of the Greek troops the historic pass of Thermopylae. But its position is obviously precarious and another evacuation now stares it in the face. Norway, France, Libya, and now Greece. One does not know the exact strength of the Imperial troops assembled in the Balkans but it must be pretty considerable and the Royal Navy will have to bear the burden of another Dunkirk: one hopes that at least the withdrawal will be as successful as at Dunkirk.

It is too early yet to assess the full consequences of the disaster that has overtaken Yugoslavia, Greece and her Ally. But let us realise the worst and face stark realities. Yugoslavia is not only defeated but disintegrated. It is futile to expect any guerilla warfare on the part even of the brave Serbians in view of the overwhelming and barbaric might of the Nazi conquerors. The Hellenes fought gallantly for six long months against great odds and inflicted severe losses upon the Fascist aggressors. They have covered themselves with undying glory and their names like those of their classical forefathers will forever live in history. The knockout blow the Blitzkrieg has given them carries with it no disgrace, as the Germans themselves will readily admit. King George of Greece and his Government are at present in Crete from which they have declared their determination to continue the fight. But it will be merely moral and nominal. Greece as a power is *hors de combat* and finally out of the war picture.

Let us remember in gratitude that it was the heroism of Greece which changed the picture of war in

favour of the democracies six months ago. Let us visualise the situation at the end of October 1940, when the Duce in the plenitude of his audacity gave a two hour ultimatum to the late General Metaxas. A man of lesser guts would have knuckled under that threat and meekly signed on the dotted line. The Greek Dictator refused to compromise his country's integrity and honour even though the Axis seemed utterly invincible then. He not only resisted the Italian army but routed it out from Greek soil. It was the brave and picturesque Evzones who first revealed the clay feet within the Fascist highboots. And finally it was their successful resistance which indirectly made possible the brilliant British offensive in the Western Desert.

Speaking purely from a military point of view, the Nazis deserve full marks for their Balkan victory. It is true that they have had to pay a stiff price (the exact nature of which we will not know until the end of the war) for their Blitzkrieg but then they have always been lavish with human fodder. No casualties are too many for them if they can gain their end. Which they have for the time being. But the Balkan campaign is not the real, ultimate end of Hitler. It is only the first step in the Drive To The East. And it is yet a long, long way that he has to travel to Baghdad or to Suez. A glance at the map shows that Hitler is to-day master of most of the Mediterranean shore except on the east. His Balkan victories have enabled him to command the Adriatic as well as the Aegean and to close the Dardanelles if he so desires. The German forces will now lose no time in capturing the small islands which dot the Aegean Sea thus encircling Turkey. Indeed the main result of the Balkan victory is to isolate Turkey strategically. That country will now find it increasingly difficult to resist the diplomatic pressure of Hitler and I should not be surprised if it passes finally in the Totalitarian orbit, situated as it is between the Scylla of Stalin and

the Charybdis of Hitler. This is not to say that Turkey will not fight if Hitler's greed gets the better of his discretion and if he encroaches upon the territorial integrity of Turkey. In that case the Turks will fight, but only in that, and Hitler knows when to hold his hand.

The coils of the Nazi python hold the Mediterranean lands in its evil grip but paradoxically enough the British Navy rules supreme over the Mediterranean Sea itself. The *Mare Nostrum* has only proved the grave of Mussolini's spick and span Armada and even the Luftwaffe beats its wings in vain in search of its prey over its blue and tranquil waters. Malta, Cyprus and now Crete stand like three sturdy sentinels almost in a straight line drawn east to west, across the middle of the Middle Sea, while Gibraltar and Port Said hermetically seal its two exits. As long as those bases are in British hands, the Mediterranean will remain British and the Axis legions spread along its shores will know no peace. Throughout history the Mediterranean has been known as the Sea Of Destiny. It was around its shores that ancient civilisation had its birth. It was in its bosom that the city republics of Greece flourished and the glory that was ancient Rome saw its heyday. And it looks as if that the Mediterranean is once again destined to play a decisive role in the fortunes of this war, which means in the fate of humanity.

May 2, 1941

"What will Hitler do next?"—Once again, with bated breath, the world is asking the question, which has been on its lips for almost a decade now. The time, it seems, is yet far distant when the question can be asked "What will the world do with Hitler?"

To-day he seems to be at the plenitude of his power with almost the whole of the European conti-

nent (except Russia) under his heel. His second Spring-Krieg has proved as victorious as the first. He crushed two countries within two weeks and he is master of all he surveys from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Belgrade is a city of the dead to-day while over the fabled Acropolis in Athens flies the Swastika. The British Expeditionary Force may be entitled to the greatest tributes for the grim courage with which it fought in the mountains of Greece but a reverse is a reverse howsoever glorious. After all, as Churchill said after Dunkirk, victories are not won by evacuations.

In Africa, too, after being halted for some time at Sollum, the Axis forces have now penetrated the frontiers of Egypt proper. It is true that the main British defensive positions round about Mersa Matruh have yet to be reached and it is also pointed out in London that Sollum was not seriously defended. Even so, this unhindered march is causing considerable disquiet, especially because the latest reports reveal that the outer defences of Tobruk, which had the greatest strategic significance, have now been pierced by the invaders. The Nazi legions are thus knocking at the gates of the East from both the ends. In Europe, after the collapse of Greece, they are stretched in full strength along the entire west of Turkey, which is thus being strategically isolated from her British ally.

In Africa, they have dashed from Benghazi to Sidi Barrani even quicker than did the British four months ago. The exact strength of the attackers is not known. But it seems from the fact that the momentum of the offensive is not yet exhausted in spite of the lengthening lines of communications, that it must be pretty strong. The worst of this Libyan setback has been the wrong kind of news that has been vouchsafed to us. All along, ever since El Agheila was suddenly occupied a month ago, it has been a futile and even fatuous attempt to under-estimate and play down the Axis threat. Either something is wrong

with the British intelligence service, or the War Office underrates the public intelligence.

The present campaign sounds as the overture to *Drang Nach Osten* (Drive To The East), the tune which has inspired German Imperialists from the beginning of this century. The Fuehrer seems to be poised for his tiger-spring on Suez, which is going to be the converging point of the pincer movement, one arm of which is already striking at Egypt and the other may at any time threaten Turkish Thrace or swoop on Vichy-mandated Syria. *Reuter's Military Commentator* discusses a number of possibilities regarding the next Nazi moves. After referring to the design on Suez, he suggests the likelihood of a simultaneous attack on Gibraltar and occupation of Tangier and Spanish Morocco. This appears to be only a minor if vital aspect of the Drive to the East. Hitler cannot hope to be master either of the Near or Middle East unless and until the British are entirely shut out from the Mediterranean. The capture of Suez will be meaningless without the simultaneous seizure of Gibraltar, the only other outlet of the Mediterranean.

But when *Reuter's Military Correspondent* proceeds to suggest that Hitler may attack the Soviet in order to lay his hands on the wheat of the Ukraine and the oil of the Caucasus, I must enter a caveat with due humility. At best it is wishful thinking to believe that Hitler will do any such rash thing at the present stage of the war. Mark the words "at the present stage of the war". I am quite prepared to admit that Russia has been long since marked as a victim of German aggression—in fact you can read it in so many words in *Mein Kampf*. Not only that but even ideologically speaking a clash between the two Dictators is ultimately inevitable. Stalin knows this too well and all his strategic dispositions are being made mainly from

the view-point of meeting the Nazi menace when it materialises. But that time is not yet.

The countries directly concerned in Hitler's Drive To The East are Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Soviet also will be affected by (and even we in India will have to look out for) the development if and when it materialises. But this need not detain us for the present. All the countries named earlier belong to the Islamic bloc. Of these Syria is a mandatory of Vichy France and Palestine of Britain, which means that their minds will be made up for them by their respective rulers.

Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan are loosely connected by the Saadabad Pact, though it entails no obligations whatsoever *inter se*. If there is any common ground between all those nations it is more due to the vague feeling of Islamic fraternity rather than any hard and fast diplomatic alliances. On the whole, Islam has been during this war on the side of Britain. This is notwithstanding the very intensive propaganda which is being conducted for many years now both by Germany and Italy. Mussolini styled himself ostentatiously as the Protector of Islam, though such an empty gesture could hardly win over the oppressed Muslims of Libya or Abyssinia.

May 9, 1941

We seem to be on the eve of another April 6, 1917. That was a historic date in World War I. For on that fateful day the United States of America formally entered the war on the side of the Allies. All the straws in the present international winds indicate that history will soon repeat itself in World War II.

General Smuts categorically declared in the Union Senate last week that "America will come into the war": and that philosopher-soldier is not given to blowing hot air. Similarly the very shrewd Manuel Que-

zon, President of the Philippines, observed in the Special National Assembly that "the trend of events seems to point strongly to the possibility of American entry into the present war." Both those pronouncements, it will be noticed, were made on official occasions. Nor is the United States standing alone on the brink of belligerency. The other American democracies, too, (except for a few States in South America) share her views. The Foreign Minister of Mexico, for example, unequivocally expressed his opinion the other day that the Americas' destiny is to take part in the fray and that the Mexican people are prepared to co-operate for the defence of democracy.

This change-over from rigid neutrality to ardent participation in the ordeal of war is one of the most amazing phenomena of modern times. Gone is the gruff Cash and Carry—if you can!—of October 1939. Within the brief space of twenty months the good Yankees—Democrats, Republicans *et al* are crying: Let us Build and Deliver right on Britain's doorstep whatever and as much as she wants. Let us build aeroplanes, ships, guns, munitions and what not, build until it hurts, as Mr. Wendell Willkie said. Let us carry it across the Atlantic in American ships, convoy it with the United States Navy and damn the consequences, as the peppery Mr. Pepper demanded.

Isolationism is a discredited doctrine to-day in spite of the activities of Charles "Copperhead" Lindbergh and Last-ditcher Senator Wheeler. Both of them are being openly assailed as the agents of the Axis. The latest Gallup Poll reveals that 63 per cent of Americans who are familiar with the former's views—which presumably means his sympathisers—disagree with them. In the year 1939 the Americans considered themselves "Once bitten, thrice shy." They had resolutely turned their backs on the Old War and only the memory of the billions of unpaid war debts remained to rankle in their bosom. Never again—they said bitterly over and over again. Let the nations of

Europe stew in their own juice. It was all the same if Britain won or lost. We will never consent to draw John Bull's chestnuts out of the fire. Never again....

Now the victorious Democrat Franklin Roosevelt and the defeated Republican Wendell Willkie seem to be outbidding each other for the Aid to Britain. The latter is stumping the country outspokenly and vigorously: "I say that England will win if the United States sees to it that its ever-increasing production reaches the British Isles"...."I call upon you, the United States people, to keep those sea-lanes unbroken." President Roosevelt is burdened with supreme responsibility and naturally he has to weigh his words carefully before uttering them. He cannot thus compete with his late opponent in outspokenness. His policy seems to be "Deeds, rather than words." The way he has guided U. S. opinion step by step almost imperceptibly during the last two years entitles him to be called the world's greatest tactician.

He was the one man in high authority who knew that war was inevitable. He knew also the keen anti-war feeling among his people. One rash step or the least attempt to force the pace on his part would have spelt grave disaster. He had to walk warily while keeping his eye steadfastly fixed on the goal. Not until he smashed the tradition of two centuries and got himself re-elected as the third-term President of the United States did he give out his hand. It was barely four months ago that the epoch-making Lease and Lend Bill was introduced in the American Legislature, though the time already seems so distant. As Commander King-Hall wrote the other day "Every week that passes brings further evidence of President Roosevelt's ingenuity in the art of making undeclared war on the Nazi regime." This technique of non-intervention was practised with great success both by Germany and Italy in the Spanish War. Now that trick is coming home to roost. President Roosevelt has beaten the two dictators at their own game.

One of the most astute moves of Roosevelt was when he dedicated Woodrow Wilson's birth-place as a national shrine last Sunday. Now Woodrow Wilson is a name which good Yankees were loathe to take not so long ago. It meant to them 1918 and all that. The Disillusionment. And the Debts, of course. Did they not disown their own President? Did they not turn their back on the League of Nations? Did not Woodrow Wilson die broken-hearted, unwept and unsung? This was the man whose birth-place was hailed by President Roosevelt as "a new shrine of freedom." The President said that Wilson had taught that democracy could not survive in isolation and added "We applaud his judgment and his faith!"

So by a subtle though inescapable implication, the United States is back again to that fateful day in April 1917, is once again being impelled to take the momentous decision which President Woodrow Wilson took on the 6th of April 1917. Woodrow Wilson was a scholastic and an idealist. Franklin Delano Roosevelt is a politician to his finger-tips. The former had his head in the clouds. The latter has his feet firmly planted in realities. The vindication 24 years later, of Wilson by Roosevelt is thus one of the most thrilling moments of history.

The latest message from Washington says: "Circles close to the administration believe that the President realises his next decisions will have to be tremendous and he will not make them until he is ready, though they believe that such decisions can scarcely wait longer than a few weeks, if that." Or it may be a few days, even a few hours. Mark the very clever way in which the President has prepared the ground for his impending "tremendous" decision. That propaganda is best which is least so. Roosevelt knows the truth of this paradox too well. And mostly therefore he has remained in the background allowing his trusted lieutenants "to put it across."

During the last two weeks, for example, all the big guns of the administration have been in action. Both Col. Knox, Secretary of the Navy, and Mr. Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, spoke on the 25th of April, their speeches being broadcast to the nation. "We cannot allow our goods to be sunk in the Atlantic," declared Col. Knox. Dittoed Mr. Hull:—"Ways must be found to ensure that aid to Britain reaches its destination in the shortest time and at the maximum capacity." Those pressing demands from such high quarters certainly could not go unheeded. And within four days we find President Roosevelt declaring that United States warships might enter the so far prohibited combat zones if necessary in the interest of the defence of the Western Hemisphere. They could cruise right up to the British Isles, of course, if necessary for the defence etc., underlined the President, adding quickly "that did not mean they were going in!" No! Sir, but just in case.

I am sure Hitler must have pulled off a handful of hair from his head after partaking of this neutrality sauce. What a cheek for a mere democratic President to cut into such Totalitarian technique of non-intervention! He certainly would sink all those convoys—if only he could....But worse was yet in store for the furious Fuehrer. Within a few days another Big Bertha boomed forth from Washington. The speech broadcast to the nation by Mr. Stimson, Secretary of State for War, on May 7th can be described only as an unofficial declaration of hostilities against the Axis Powers. One cannot think of a Secretary of State making such a speech unless he had the full sanction of his colleagues and his chief behind him. The broadcast was obviously meant to test public reaction to such an eventuality actually coming to pass. But it was more than a feeler; it was a strong stimulant.

## VIII

# THE SKY Vs. THE SEA

*If Britain and her sea-power survive the (air) attack, Hitler is lost and not even the prospect of a stalemate will be left to him.*

Field-Marshal Smuts

May 16, 1941

RUDOLPH HESS, Nazi Prince of Wales once removed, crashed into news in the early hours of Tuesday morning, though actually he baled out from his Messerschmitt 110 on a Scottish farm two days earlier.

It was certainly the most sensational story of the war. It has kept the telegraph wires buzzing for the last four days and all sorts of inferences and guesses are being made to account for this amazing escapade of Hitler's most trusted Deputy. The Nazis are trying their level best to soften this staggering blow to the Reich morale. They are cleverly trying to dismiss it as a mad man's act. Herr Hess, they aver, has been going potty for a long time and that the Fuehrer had relieved him of most of his responsibilities long since. But even if Hess was suffering from a mental disorder, as alleged by Dr. Goebbels, there was certainly a method in his madness. The very thorough preparations he made for his successful get-away and the fact that he landed almost plumb on his destination—the Duke of Hamilton's country seat—conclusively prove that there is nothing wrong with his grey matter.

What is the explanation then of this most amazing episode of the war? As Mr. Churchill pithily put it, "This is one of those cases in which imagination is

somewhat baffled by facts as they present themselves." At the moment of writing the full facts are yet to present themselves. What we have is fanciful conjectures, wishful thinking and even an unconscious idolisation of the ex-No. 3 Nazi! I for one heartily welcome Mr. Ernest Bevin's sharp indictment of Hess as "a murderer" and M. Masaryk's characterisation of him as "a swine and a rogue". These descriptions may swing to the other extreme but at least they help us to see things in their proper perspective.

If a Nazi can become respectable simply because he rats from his fellow-gangsters, then there is something really wrong with the British approach to and conduct of the war. Herr Hess is being hailed as upright, sincere, idealist and what not for being a traitor—that is what he has done, to put it bluntly. If tomorrow in a fit of hallucination the Fuehrer himself follows suit and lands on Buckingham Palace grounds, he will probably be canonised as the Saint of Berchtesgaden by those who are to-day lauding the man who bears his full share of responsibility for every heinous crime committed by the Nazis on their own and other peoples from the blood-bath of June 30, 1934, in Berlin to the diabolical mass-murder in Belgrade on April 6, 1941.

I grant that Hess has tons of propaganda value to-day and that every opportunity must be taken to exploit this heaven-sent opportunity. The German people to-day must be literally dumb-founded by this desertion of their beloved Deutschland by a man whom they worshipped. There must be something really rotten in the Nazi core if things can happen like this—they must be feeling! That feeling must be rammed home for all it is worth and turned into a psychological dynamite to explode the Nazi tyranny. But that is about all that Hess is worth. On the other hand who knows that this stunt might not be one more carefully calculated machination of those "Totalitarian Gentlemen" to create confusion in the mind of their oppo-

nents? There is an ancient saying: "Beware of the Greeks even when they bring presents." Similarly it is better to beware of a Nazi even though he crashes down from the sky as a refugee. There is only one thing more dangerous than a Nazi. That is another Nazi! Mr. Bevin and M. Masaryk therefore have done a great service by exploding the flapdoodle of the last few days.

Meanwhile the war remains to be fought. Hitler will fight it the more and not the less grimly because of Hess' betrayal into the hands of his enemies. Let us note this very pertinent fact. Whatever advantages will accrue to Britain through Hess will be indirect and remote, if any at all. But the full fury of a Fuehrer at bay will be released on his enemies forthwith. It seems as if this week-end will mark the opening of the second phrase of the German Drive to the East. The latest reports say that the German Air Force is already installed in four Syrian bases and that a German-Italian Military Mission has arrived at the Iraqi capital. These reports are not yet officially confirmed but there seems no reason to disbelieve them. This development seems to be the first fruit of the Nazi-Vichy collaboration which Marshal Petain publicly approved the other day.

Syria is under the spotlight again and the unhindered passage of German troops and aeroplanes over this mandated territory is bound to provoke an Anglo-French crisis. The British Government has so far shown an exemplary patience in its dealings with Vichy in the hope that Marshal Petain will not allow things to go too far. But all its restraint and all the good offices of President Roosevelt have proved unavailing and the evil genius of Admiral Darlan seems to be actively heading towards an open conflict with France's late Ally.

The Syrians had never much love lost for their French masters. It was in Syria where the Arab national feeling was born in the middle of the last cen-

tury and where it gradually became most vocal. The mandate was marked by continued disorders right from 1920 to 1935 and it was only the treaties of 1936 by which France promised to grant independence to Syria and Lebanon after three years, which gave a semblance of peace and contentment to the country. That promise was never kept. The declaration of war in September 1939 naturally postponed the whole issue and Syria, too, was dragged into the ignominy of defeat by the French capitulation in June 1940.

This is the background of Syria which now bids fair to become another bloody theatre of war. Not merely Syria but all her neighbours are vitally concerned with the latest ominous developments. To begin with, an occupation of Syria by German troops would mean that Turkey is firmly and finally encircled. She will thenceforth be virtually reduced to the position of Sweden or Switzerland, without the natural protection of the latter. If Marshal Petain is good enough to give a passage to Hitler's hordes there is no reason why Turkey should be provoked into fight at all. The Fuehrer will be quite content to keep Turkey in permanent isolation—at his pleasure. And the Turks would be at perfect liberty to flatter themselves that they have retained their territorial integrity and national independence!

What of the other neighbours of Syria? Iraq has already been sold by Rashid Ali to Hitler while Iran is most concerned about what surprise Stalin would spring upon her. King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia and Emir Abdullah of Transjordan are, however, level-headed statesmen and they are not likely to walk into the Axis parlour. It only remains to be seen how far they will be successful in maintaining peace in the Arab world. It is obvious that critical days lie ahead of Britain. Both the arms of the Axis pincer movement against Suez seem at present poised to strike the blow. The situation would have been not so bad had it not been for the danger of Anglo-French hostilities.

Syria is the danger-signal not so much for the East as for the West. That is to say if the Anglo-French clash, which seems imminent there, spreads further and develops into an open war between the ex-Allies, the war will have entered into its most critical phase. That would be the greatest triumph of Hitler, though France will be doubly dead in that process. Last June she was dead to her freedom. Will next June see the demise of her national honour?

May 23, 1941

The battle of Crete is developing like a Wellesian fantasy, as Reuter's Special Correspondent picturesquely describes it.

The fighting so far has generally been in favour of the defendants, though the Germans seem to have succeeded in making a number of isolated landings of air-borne troops. The town of Heraklion, the aerodrome at Malami and a few unspecified positions in the Canea-Suda Bay sector are in the occupation of the Nazis and they are rushing reinforcements regardless of the heavy toll they have had to pay during the last three days. The situation is very vague at the moment of writing but the determined manner in which the Nazis are pressing home the attack shows the great value they set upon the subjugation of this last Greek stronghold. Strategically they are in an extremely advantageous position to launch the attack, though so far the Royal Navy has not allowed any large-scale naval landing to take place, a number of transports being sunk on the way.

On the other hand Mr. Churchill revealed in the House of Commons yesterday that the Allies are without air support owing to the lack of good aerodromes in the island and this appears to be a serious shortcoming. British bombers have to fly all the way from

not obviously available to intercept the troop-carriers which are ferrying Nazi forces to Crete. This gives cause for some anxiety considering the huge strength of the Luftwaffe and the Nazi High Command's notorious disregard for their casualties. This large-scale invasion of Crete was expected and the recent appointment of Major-General Freyburg V.C., as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Crete, shows that every precaution was being taken to defend this key island. With Malta lying 600 miles to its west and Cyprus about 450 miles to the east, Crete forms the strategic centre of Britain's command of the Mediterranean Sea.

As long as these three bastions are safe in the hands of the Allies, the Nazis will find it extremely hazardous to invade Syria. The liquidation of these three sea-bases is essential for Hitler's mastery over the Mediterranean and his proposed drive to the East. Crete lies nearest the Greek Archipelago and its defences are not as strong as those of Malta, which has stood valiantly to the Fascist and Nazi bombing for the last 20 months. The fighting that is going on there at present will, in the words of Mr. Churchill, affect the whole course of the campaign in the Mediterranean.

While immediate attention is thus focussed on Crete, perhaps a bigger anxiety is being caused by the rapidly deteriorating relations between Vichy and Britain. The permission given to Germany to use the Syrian aerodromes was the culminating act of the sordid drama of Vichy-Berlin "collaboration". As long as this co-operation embraced only economic matters, there might have been some excuse for it. As they are saying in France at present, hungry stomachs have no ears—for right or wrong!

In order to curry favours with his Nazi masters, however, Admiral Darlan carried this collaboration into the field of production of war material. There is it ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> proof that most of the factories and even

ship-yards in un-occupied France are busy building war material for the Nazis. Apart from being a gross treachery towards a former Ally, this constituted a flagrant violation of the Armistice terms, to which, Petain said again and again, he would stick. Britain's toleration was probably misunderstood for weakness. Darlan's tone gradually became more truculent—even belligerent and his threat of escorting convoys from Africa with French warships was an open intimation that he would stop short at nothing. Then came the Nazi attack on Libya, when there was a well-grounded suspicion that Axis transports had used French territorial waters in North Africa.

Even this gross transgression of neutrality was glossed over by a Britain desperately anxious to maintain the facade of peace *vis-a-vis* Vichy. But Syria was a different matter altogether and in sheer self-protection Britain had to take swift action against German aeroplanes established on its aerodromes. Vichy first professed not to treat this as a *casus belli* but since then the orders passed to General Dentz, the French Governor of Syria, and the unashamed supply of French equipment to Rashid Ali prove that Darlan is determined to drag France into war against Britain.

The biggest headache of the hour for a war commentator is provided, however, not by treacherous Vichy nor by the rebel Rashid Ali but by the inscrutable Stalin! This is, of course, a chronic complaint for nearly two years now but it has suddenly assumed a very serious proportion by the latest developments in the Near East. Less than four weeks ago we were being told that a war between Germany and Russia was imminent, that both Stalin and Hitler had massed huge armies on their respective borders and that the Nazi legions would soon swoop on Ukraine. A British paper even wrote that a regular anti-Bolshevist Army was being raised and trained by Hitler in Poland!

Now one finds that the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. We are informed that a fresh pact

between Russia and Germany is in the offing, that the terms of the division of the Near East are already fixed (it may interest readers to note here that India, under this dispensation, is to be the *lebensraum* of Russia) and that Hitler and Stalin will soon be meeting to pledge their troth aboard a warship in the Black Sea —befitting setting for a black deed! Hitler will surely welcome this pact. Nor is such a consummation impossible in the case of Stalin. But I hardly believe that a development of this nature is probable. If there is to be a division of the Near East at all, it is not a new story. Its draft was drawn up when M. Molotov visited Hitler last year, according to American correspondents in Berlin.

Stalin is not going to fight against Hitler. Much less will he fight for him. If he makes a strategic move in Iran, simultaneously as, when and if Hitler steps into Iraq, it will be to forestall him and not to oblige him. Russia was the diplomatic top-dog in Iran until the last war. Stalin may revert to that role and re-establish the traditional foreign policy of his Czarist predecessors as he has done in the Baltic. In the latter case, he put a buffer between hungry Hitler and the fertile Ukraine wheat-fields. In the former, he will only interpose Iran between thirsty Hitler and the rich Baku oilwells! This is *machtpolitik* of which Stalin has proved himself a perfect master. And those who have followed the tangled skein of post-war Europe will hardly blame Stalin for following such a realistic policy. The Slav has a suspicious mind and like the elephant he never forgets. Stalin's present policy may presumably be a tragedy for democracy, but then Stalin has never bothered much about democracy of the capitalist brand.

The real meaning of Hitler-Stalin entente must be sought for under this light. Both Hitler and Stalin are opportunists, blatantly so. But the former looks only to to-morrow, while the latter has his eye fixed

on the day after. Hitler wants somehow to win the war: Stalin wonders—After war, what?

Stalin is not the only person who is wondering over this problem. The real tragedy of this war is that nobody seems able to provide a straightforward answer to this vital question.

May 30, 1941

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth no doubt serves as a good old law but a BISMARCK for a HOOD is still better.

That was a swift revenge which the Royal Navy took upon the German raiding Armada last Tuesday. Launched in February 1939 and commissioned barely seven months ago, the BISMARCK was the apple of the German Admiralty's eye. She was reputed to be unsinkable and the very preponderating force which was assembled from all sides by the Royal Navy to trap and destroy her, shows how rich the prize was. With the BISMARCK and the GRAF SPEE lying at the bottom of the sea and the GNEISENAU and the SCHARNHORST seeking a precarious shelter in the Brest harbour, Germany has not much of a navy left. Nor is her junior Axis partner faring much better after Taranto and Cape Matapan. Britain after twenty months of war is more a mistress of the seas than she was at the beginning.

Theoretically so. For in practice, of course, the battle of the seas is still being relentlessly fought. German submarines and armed merchantmen are even now taking a toll of British shipping at three times its replacement rate—this grave fact being revealed by President Roosevelt himself in his historic fire-side chat. It will take all the strength of the British Navy and all the help the United States can give to defeat those marauders of the high seas. The Battle of the Atlantic remains the star turn of the war programme and Hitler is staking his all on it, as is evident from

the fact that BISMARCK was put to sea with the solitary escort of PRINZ EUGEN (which incidentally escaped the net)—a battleship is always ringed by destroyers and supported by a number of cruisers.

To run down a heavy ship in the limitless expanse of the waters is itself a Herculean task but to hunt the numerous elusive U and E-boats, which have the coastline of a whole continent to take cover, is an extraordinarily difficult and often a heart-breaking job. The sinking of the BISMARCK thus amounts to no more than an incident howsoever thrilling in the shifting fortunes of war. It does not betoken the end of the naval war, even though the German navy may have received a serious blow. The figures of the loss of British shipping for the next few weeks will indicate better how the Battle of the Atlantic is going.

The most important aspect of this epic battle was the part played by Britain's naval aircraft not merely in shadowing the prey but substantially disabling it and thus bringing it within the striking range of the capital ships. It will be no consolation to Dr. Goebbels that the much-sunk ARK ROYAL played a leading role in sending the BISMARCK to its doom. In the battle of Cape Matapan also a similar gallant role was played by the Fleet Air Arm in smashing the Italian navy. The Air Arm is now discharging in a superlative degree the duty which formerly devolved on the Destroyers. The latter were called the greyhounds of the ocean; the former may be aptly styled the hawks. It serves not only as the eyes and ears of the battle fleet but also acts as its first weapon of offence.

The aerial torpedo has proved itself to be most deadly wherever it was used, at Taranto, Cape Matapan and now in Denmark Strait. The co-operation of the air arm and the fleet is the most important development of modern naval strategy. Admiral Cunningham first used the new technique to perfection at Cape Matapan and that the British Admiralty was quick to

perceive its immense potentialities is evident from the fact that not one but two aircraft-carriers (the ARK ROYAL and the VICTORIOUS) were despatched to dog the victim in the Atlantic. Had it not been for their lynx-eyed reconnaissance, the BISMARCK would very probably have succeeded in shaking off the pursuit. This very effective co-operation between the two arms gives a new orientation to the old controversy between aeroplanes and warships. A correct measure of their relative strength, when acting independently, has yet to be taken. One can only say that so far aeroplanes have not succeeded in sinking warships by bombing nor have warships succeeded in driving the aeroplanes out of the skies.

In a way the bitter struggle that is going on in Crete for the last eleven days is also serving as an illustration of the theme "Air Power vs. Sea Power". Paradoxically enough the combat is staged on land. So far in spite of the grim and prolonged defence put up by the Allies, the fighting seems to have gone in favour of the attackers and perhaps they will have won the last round by the time these lines are in print. It goes without saying that the loss of this key island in the Mediterranean will be a severe blow to Britain, but what concerns us here at the moment is the tactics employed by the Nazis and the inferences that can be drawn from the developments of the last week.

To begin with, Crete will go down in history as the classical and complete example of an enemy objective being assaulted (and occupied) solely by aerial operations. Last year the German High Command had used parachutists and air-borne troops in Norway, Holland and Belgium. But they were essentially a secondary weapon; at best they served as the spear-head of the main surface attack. It is possible that while drawing the blue-prints of the Crete Blitzkrieg, it was hoped by the Nazi General Staff that the air-borne troops would be speedily reinforced by naval landings once the former succeeded in getting a foot-

hold on the island. At any rate determined attempts were made on the nights of the 20th and 21st May to land convoys from the Greek mainland.

Those convoys were mostly sunk or scattered by the Mediterranean Fleet and it appears that, thenceforth, few Axis ships dared to run the gauntlet of the Royal Navy. The Nazis had no other recourse but to rely on their transport planes which have been engaged in a constant relay from Greece to Crete and *vice versa*. They had not only to land troops but arms, ammunitions, supplies as well as food and I should not be surprised even if a few baby-tanks were ferried across in this manner. For this operation the complete supremacy of the air was naturally very essential and that they could establish this in the very first two days was, from the British view-point, most unfortunate. The sudden and inexplicable withdrawal of British Fighters from Cretan aerodromes made the field clear for the dive-bombing and merciless Stukas and the quick-working Junkers (JU 52) carrier aircraft. Nor does Crete seem to have had any excessive number of anti-aircraft guns in service.

The Germans seem to have thrown every available parachutist and every carrier plane, not to talk of bombers, fighters and gliders, in the fray. The Luftwaffe availed itself splendidly of the opportunity provided by the R.A.F.'s mysterious disappearance from Cretan skies at any rate for the first few days. Even so, they must have paid a very, very heavy toll—nothing is more easy a target than a descending parachutist or more vulnerable than a landing troop-carrier. But it is not in the nature of the Germans to do things by half. The expedition was to be carried jointly by air and sea. The sea failed. But the air remained and the Nazis are entitled to full marks for the relentless way they pursued their objective. It is no use trying to detract from their success by saying that they were prodigal of their man-power:

one has got to be prodigal as well as pitiless in the worship of Mars.

On the other hand, the Royal Navy has paid very dearly for the destruction of German convoys, as Mr. Churchill revealed in the House of Commons. Three cruisers and four destroyers were lost totally, while two battleships and several cruisers were damaged. This is a fearful price to pay, for what is unfortunately turning out to be a hopeless task—the defence of Crete. The casualties suffered by the Allied forces are not known at the time of writing. The foregoing recital of facts does not warrant the conclusion that the German Air Force has triumphed over the British Royal Navy or, much less, that air power will always have the better of sea power.

In the battle of Crete the Luftwaffe had all the advantages and the Mediterranean Fleet all the disadvantages, as a glance at the map will show. Crete is a mountainous island of barely 3,000 square miles, without any well-fortified harbour to provide protection or supplies to the navy. The nearest British naval base is 360 miles away at Alexandria. Worst of all, the navy lacked air support altogether and it had to rely solely on its own guns to keep the Stukas at bay. The Luftwaffe had only a distance of a hundred miles to cover from the Greek mainland to Crete. It could thus throw into the fray its fighters and even the gliders. Moreover it is apparent that the Germans had as usual made thorough preparations for the invasion and they seem to have had numberless squadrons ready to take to the air at a moment's notice, apart from a most efficient ground staff and limitless quantities of oil on the Greek aerodromes.

In addition to all this, there seems to have been a psychological factor at work—which is the prestige of the Luftwaffe and the Reichswehr itself. It is said that the Nazis had expected to capture Crete within two days. When this plan was foiled, they had to persist in the game regardless of the cost, as much for the

strategic value of the island as for sheer prestige. They sacrificed their finest specialised troops and seem to have relied upon their very weight of numbers to carry them to success. A defeat would have proved disastrous and another opportunity would have been well-nigh out of question.

We must take all those factors into consideration before striking the balance-sheet of the battle of Crete. The problem of air power vs. sea power has not been solved, though the battle has once again conclusively proved that an army unsupported by a strong air arm is always at the mercy of the enemy's air force. This lesson was taught in Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia and Greece. It has been rubbed in again in Crete. It is really a pity that Britain has so far failed to profit by this lesson. At any rate the withdrawal of the R.A.F. from Crete seems to be utterly inexplicable, except on the assumption that a sufficiently strong force could not be spared. But this in its turn sounds strange considering the high strategic value put upon the defence of the island by none less than Prime Minister Churchill himself.

The huge German losses afford a negative satisfaction of course. The gallant and prolonged defence by the garrison will add another glorious chapter to the history of the war. The aerial invasion of Crete was, in a sense, a full dress rehearsal of that bigger invasion of Britain, at which Hitler has been jibbing for ten months now. He will jib no longer. He will probably drop it altogether after his latest experience. Crete will have thus served Britain well.

June 6, 1941

"When", General Maxime Weygand is reported to have asked in a moment of deep exasperation, "will the old man (Petain) stop sleeping with that charcoal dealer from Chateldon (Laval)?"

This was a long time ago when Petain was a legend of the nation, Weygand an idol of the army and Laval the despair of the French diplomats. The future of France seemed bound then with those three great personalities. The man who holds the whiphand in that fallen nation to-day is neither the senile Petain, nor the exile Weygand nor the discredited Laval. Admiral Darlan, the ambitious and unscrupulous Anglophobe, is at present the ace of trumps both in unoccupied and occupied France. This position he holds to-day by having proved himself a most willing jack of the Nazis.

Darlan was not a famous name outside France before the cataclysmic events of last June threw him in the limelight. But he was known as the father of the French Navy and his men are said to be personally most devoted to him. The strength of the undefeated French Navy is still the strength of the Admiral both in the eyes of the Nazis and of the British. Darlan's greatest ambition is said to be to pit the French Navy against the British and since the unfortunate clash in Oran, this ambition has grown into a pathological itch. His frequent threats and even acts of escorting convoys bound for France with warships and defying the Royal Navy to do its worst spring from this desire. In its fruition Darlan does not apparently mind even if he is acting as the agent of the Nazis.

For the matter of that, none of the gang which controls the defeatist and demoralised Government of France minds it. At Vichy have gathered at present all the reactionaries, all the self-seeking politicians and the scum of the notorious two hundred families, all the generals, who refused to fight for France, and the statesmen who sacrificed the precious heritage of liberty, equality and fraternity to buy a dishonourable peace. The specious name of Petain, who was the saviour of France in the last war, covers the sins of the betrayers of *la patrie* in the present. The names of all of them are tarred by the same brush. Even

Petain's is no exception, though possibly he is the most disinterested person in Vichy to-day. One must not forget that Petain himself has been a deep-dyed reactionary all his life. He bears a great military renown but his outlook is not only military—that has been all along a grave failing of the French army. French Generals and Admirals have been always fond of dabbling in politics and to-day they seem to be having a field-day over the prostrate body of France.

It must be remembered that whatever may be his personal integrity and solicitude for the welfare of his motherland, Petain is in his eighties, when it is physically impossible for any human being to bear the responsibilities of such a crown of thorns. He is surrounded by sycophants who pamper to his vanity in order to gain their own ends. One wonders whether this Protector of France is cognisant of half the things that are being done under his imprimatur. There was a flicker of ancient firmness in Petain's present career when he sacked Pierre Laval some months ago. It seemed for a time as if the aged Marshal would assert his authority not only over his subordinates in Vichy but also *vis-a-vis* his masters in Paris and Berlin. But alas! that proved a vain delusion and Petain has only transferred himself from the political machinations of Laval to the evil counsels of Admiral Darlan.

Admiral Darlan is easily traitor No. I to all that is decent and honourable in the French nation. All the men—and rumour talks of a number of women too!—of Vichy have a personal interest in the triumph of Hitler. When Petain and his associates advised unconditional surrender in those dark days of last June, they were convinced that the end of the European war was near at hand. After the defeat of France it would be only a matter of weeks, so they thought, that the British, too, would be compelled to lay down arms. "The war is finished,"—was their defeatist refrain. It took little time for them to be disillusioned.

"Of course the war will continue", declared Premier Churchill in a very matter-of-fact manner in the Parliament. That was bad enough for Petain and Co. But what was infinitely more galling to their *amour-propre* was that General de Gaulle should raise the standard of Free France and immediately win many adherents.

The war is going on still, a year after the fall of France. If the British win, where will be Petain and the other puppets in Vichy who have learnt to fawn upon Hitler for an occasional crumb from his table? No! They must not allow such a contingency to develop. For their own despicable personal ends, Britain must be defeated and France must continue to grovel in the dust.....This, shorn of all platitudes and falsehoods, is the stand now taken by the men of Vichy. It seems unbelievable that there would be anybody so base as to sell the future of his own people in order to save his own skin. Marshal Petain still continues to talk of honourably and strictly adhering to the terms of the Franco-German Armistice. Now no one is taken in by this eye-wash. It has been proved time and again to be a down-right deception.

Admiral Darlan is obviously the most dangerous protagonist of the new order—which means the complete, final and permanent subjugation of France to Germany. While his fellow-stooges in Vichy seem to suffer from an occasional twinge of conscience and generally adopt a negative, however cringing pro-Nazi attitude, the Admiral is active and outspoken in his admiration for Hitler—and equally so in his hatred for Britain. Darlan has a number of points in his favour as compared with the other men of Vichy. As Admiral of the Fleet, he still holds his head high, for the French Fleet, unlike the French Army which was shattered within six weeks, has never been defeated. This adds to his stature as against Weygand who has banished himself to French North Africa.

Darlan is equally unscrupulous and more aggressive than the crafty Laval. The latter had his own

idea of a new order in France. His personal preference was for the Duce rather than for the Fuehrer and he had a grandiose plan for the Latin hegemony of the Continent of Europe. Laval's stock naturally fell with that of his Italian idol and the Nazis too seem to have quietly dropped him when they found in Darlan a more devoted admirer! The wily Laval is a past master of diplomacy and he would never have hesitated to double-cross the Nazis on a suitable occasion. Darlan, on the other hand, is an innocent abroad in the political field and his only consuming passion is his own ambition. If that is satisfied, he is likely to remain "Ever gratefully yours". The Nazis, who are clever in playing upon such foibles of their tools, are said to have promised to make Darlan the Admiral of Europe in the New Continental Order, which, it is rumoured, will be ceremoniously heralded next week.

It seems as if that the good Darlan has swallowed this bait hook, line and sinker. His recent utterances make one believe that he is already holding that high office! Franco-German collaboration has become for him an article not of the armistice but of faith. He is dead—utterly dead—to all sense of loyalty to France's late ally and his tone is gradually becoming more truculent, even hectoring. Personally I think that Darlan is more a fool than a knave. His selfish ambitions have blinded his political vision and the Oran incident has filled him with ideas of revenge. In this topsy-turvy world fools have, however, proved themselves more dangerous than knaves, when they act as pawns in the hands of master-rogues like the Nazis. These fools are the Trojan Horses or, to give them their modern epithet, the Fifth Columnists with whom Hitler filled the countries of Europe before he struck them down one by one. Darlan is thus no more than a Quisling but he is a Quisling with a difference. The Quislings in other countries were merely creatures of the Nazis and they shone only in the reflected light of

their masters. Darlan has a navy at his command—and therein lies all the difference, all the danger. Hitler has had his eye on that navy these eleven months and particularly since Taranto and Matapan, where Mussolini's Armada received a crippling blow, it has assumed a new high value in the eyes of the Nazis.

This is the background of the new orientation of Nazi foreign policy. Hitler is assiduously wooing the old maids of Vichy and in that process is openly showing that he is tired of his mesalliance with Mussolini. The recent Brenner meeting of the Dictators was solely meant to keep the Duce in his place—of the castaway wife! Now it is in Vichy and not in Rome that the other end of the Axis rests and Berlin is making a very ostentatious show of being generous to the new junior partner. The Italian jackal, in the first place, is severely warned off the kill. No more do we hear shouts of *Nice, Tunisia, Corsica* which rent the Roman welkin for the last decade. Now that cry is strictly *verboten* even in the Palazzo Venezia. After having thus assured Vichy of the inviolability of the disintegrating French Empire (from his own faithful Ally of all people!), Hitler gradually began to work upon the vanity and cupidity of dupes like Darlan.

The sordid tale of the treachery of the men of Vichy to their late Ally and to their own country itself, will not be fully known until the war is over. But it is obvious that unoccupied France has now become to Germany what Italy was before she became an active belligerent a year ago. The whole mercantile fleet has been practically leased to Germany for months now. Her industries are producing armaments and munitions to be used against Britain. Her ports and waters have been at the service of Germany. And to-day, in Syria Vichy France has openly aligned herself on the side of the Nazis!

Darlan is not only a Quisling. He is also acting like a French Goebbels to Hitler. Some weeks ago he declared that Germany was more generous to France than Britain because Hitler astutely returned a moiety of the wheat which he had looted from France last July! He is telling his countrymen to forget the history of the Third Republic and to pick up the threads of 1866. Britain is accused of being the chief instigator of this war and the betrayer of France. The French people ought to be content with the place assigned to them in the New European Order by Almighty Fuehrer and they should loyally abide by the *diktat* of Berlin for their own salvation.

All this is shocking but it is true. History has nothing to parallel this ignominy of a whole nation, into which Darlan has dragged France to-day. The depth of Vichy's treachery is the measure of Hitler's success. I have said it here before, and I always feel like repeating it, that Hitler's military triumph over France last June is nothing to compare with his diplomatic triumph, the fruits of which he is reaping this June. No other conqueror in history has such a triumph to his credit, so diabolical, so complete! During the last two weeks Darlan has gone all out. He does not bother to hide any longer his allegiance to his new master. He has publicly declared after the events in Syria and Sfax that he will defend French colonies against anybody—and this, too, mark you, singlehanded! This gallant sailor will thus in effect wipe off the incompetency shown by France in the war against Germany in June 1940 by valiantly fighting for her in June 1941!

The pity of it all is that Petain, too, seems to be won over completely to the new order. Here it was not wheat but the two millions of French soldiers, who are prisoners of war in Germany, who have served as the open sesame to the soldier's heart. Hitler has promised to release a certain proportion of them for services done by Vichy and the old man seems

to be pleased as Punch about it. There was the reaction of the United States to be considered and the presence of Admiral Leahy, the American Ambassador, at Vichy was so long a steadyng factor. But now even the displeasure of and the threat of the stoppage of foodships from America has ceased to count with the men of Vichy. Petain is said to have angrily retorted to Leahy when the latter handed him President Roosevelt's recent statement: "What has Roosevelt, 3,000 miles away, done for me or what can he do for me, when I have the entire German army on my neck and no more than a gendarmerie of 1,000 without a single machine gun? I am in the position of Leopold of Belgium. Why doesn't the President ask Leopold to resist?"

June 13, 1941

Syria has occupied the centre of the war stage since the early hours of Sunday last. The "invasion" of that strategic country on the eastern Mediterranean seaboard by the Allied forces has been expected for a long time. It was an "imperious exigency of war" as the Portuguese military commentator, Major Alexandre de Moraes, called it.

Particularly after the occupation of Crete by the Nazis and with the increasing collaboration between Vichy and Berlin, Syria assumed a new vital significance in the Middle East. It became a sort of geographical Trojan Horse in the British and Allied bastion in the Near and Middle East. The demoralisation of Vichy has reached the furthermost corners of the Empire. Syria once represented the proud might of French arms. Even after the collapse of the motherland a year ago, it seemed for a time as if that mandated country would uphold the honour of France. Both M. Paux, then High Commissioner, and General Mittelhauser, the military commander, declared that they would continue resistance to the Axis.

That proved the last flicker of freedom in that unhappy country. The Syrians, who were clamouring for their independence almost for a century and were expecting the fruition of their chequered national struggle in 1939, suddenly found that they had become slaves thrice over, first to Vichy, next to Rome and finally to Berlin. It was a tragic denouement, a blight of all their hopes and aspirations. The Syrians were never a prosperous or a peaceful people. Nor had they much love lost for the Mandatory Power. But their discontent took a new edge after the collapse of France and with the growing subservience of the men of Vichy to their conquerors, their plight also grew worse and worse. Their economic life was all upset by the British blockade. No oil flowed from Iraq into the reservoirs at Tripoli. Foodstuffs were scarce and prices soared high. The last was a severe winter.

All this was nothing compared to the mental confusion in which the people were thrown by the cataclysmic events of June, 1940. There was a talk of raising the standard of Syrian independence. There were vague appeals to the Turkish Government to take its old outpost once again under its wing. And as against the Pan-Arab feeling, there was the feeling of loyalty to France among the Christians of Lebanon. Axis propagandists were quick on the scene to make confusion worse confounded. An intensive anti-British propaganda was launched and a new broadcasting station was opened at Beirut. Allied newspapers were not allowed to be circulated in the country, while persons like the ex-Grand Mufti of Jerusalem found it a fertile field to disseminate their anti-British views.

Syria soon became the hotbed of Axis intrigues and with the Nazification of the Balkans it assumed a new significance in the geography of war. The Germans can drive to the East either directly across Turkey or indirectly via Syria. The Turks have so long succeeded in blocking the Berlin-Baghdad march and it has long been evident to the Nazis that they can

neither coerce nor cajole President Ineunu into giving a free passage to German troops. Hitler is a first-class strategist, however, and he has no desire to wage an unnecessary war against the Turks, if he can gain his ends by other means. Syria afforded an easier, if a little longer, way towards his objective and it was possible by occupying that country to isolate and immobilise the obdurate Turks for all time.

That is how the shadows of the Swastika have been falling fast and thick over Syria for the last few months. The German technique of infiltration and peaceful penetration is all too well-known by now. First come innocent-looking tourists who spread themselves over all parts of the country. Then there are be-spectacled archaeologists and such others who dig themselves in while digging for ancient monuments. So the process goes on until the whole country is delivered bound hand and foot. In Syria they had no reason to be so guarded and round-about. Thanks to the collaboration promised by Admiral Darlan, the Nazis proceeded at once to occupy the aerodromes and other vital strategic centres. Perhaps they had to force their pace owing to Rashid Ali's premature rising in Iraq, which appears to be finally scotched now.

In spite of the denial of Vichy there is abundant neutral evidence to prove that for all practical purposes Syria has been placed at the disposal of the Axis. Not only that, but the Nazis even prevailed upon General Dentz, the High Commissioner, to send French material to aid Rashid Ali which was surely a despicable thing to do. The British Government had given a categorical warning as long ago as the 1st of July, 1940 that Britain could not be disinterested in any events creating a new situation in Syria, detrimental either to British interests or to the countries of the Middle East. The Germans were far away then but the occupation of Crete at the end of the last month brought them dangerously near. Their ad-

vance agents had already penetrated Syria with Vichy's connivance and Ankara reported on June 1 that active preparations for the landing of German troops on Syrian soil were afoot.

No time could be lost in view of those grave developments. If once Syria was allowed to become the stronghold of the Nazis, the future of all the countries in the Middle East would be in jeopardy. The Nazi High Command would immediately press on the pincer attack against Suez and succeed in spreading the conflagration all over the Middle East. The moment for action had arrived. Syria was not merely a question of military strategy but an issue of high policy. Britain has been all along extremely patient and forbearing towards Vichy. It has tolerated numerous pin-pricks with the sole desire of not driving the Petain Government openly into Hitler's arms.

Invasive Syria was thus a veritable crossing of the Rubicon. It must have cost the British Government many hours of anxious deliberation to decide upon the course they have taken, in spite of its obvious strategic justification. The mantle of neutrality had to be torn from the pro-German visage of Vichy, even though it meant hostilities against an ex-Ally and so much strengthening of the Nazis. I, for one, feared the worst. The bellicose speeches and declarations of Admiral Darlan for the last many months gave one little hope otherwise. The ambitious Admiral has constituted himself the spokesman of the French Government and has imposed his will upon his Chief, the aged Marshal Petain. French territory would be defended at any cost, he had ominously observed only a few days ago and the visit of General Weygand to Vichy last week was generally taken as presaging a definite break with Britain.

That break, fortunately, is not yet. Vichy has promptly condemned Britain's "aggression" in invading Syria. The Vichy French forces under General Dentz are fighting with their fellow Free French

soldiers under General Catroux. The resistance may not be very strong but neither is it indifferent. It is a terribly sad spectacle to see the ex-Allies becoming enemies and brother killing brother. But Vichy has officially not declared war against Britain—as yet. That comes as a great relief, almost sounds like a miracle, to every sympathiser of the democratic cause. The Allied forces, too, are taking every care not to use more force than absolutely essential. Appeal to reason first; resort to the gun last—this seems to be the motto of the Allied High Command. On the whole, this policy has proved paying during the last five days, a number of Vichy soldiers and even whole units having gone over to their invaders.

This is the military side of the campaign. Its political side is equally if not more valuable and here, too, the Allies have begun on the right lines. Even before the first shot was fired on Syrian soil, came the stirring manifesto of General Catroux promising the Syrian people their unconditional freedom after the end of war:—"Inhabitants of Syria and the Lebanon—the hour in your history has sounded for you. France declares you independent by the voice of her sons who are fighting for her life and for the liberty of the world." This historic announcement which is solemnly endorsed by the British Government, was the most powerful weapon that could be used in the Syrian campaign. Its reactions can be easily imagined, among a people who have been striving for their liberty for a century. One only hopes that unlike similar promises given in the last war, this declaration will be implemented as speedily as possible after the cessation of hostilities.

The fortunate fact that Vichy has so long not declared war against Britain may be attributed to sheer demoralisation or to its physical inability to withstand the strong Allied attack or to its desire to placate the United States. Whatever the cause, the consequence is welcome. What about the Nazis? Why have they

failed to "collaborate" with Vichy and to avail themselves of this golden opportunity to seize the French Navy in that process? Are they going to let down Darlan as they did Rashid Ali last month? Or have they really suffered such severe losses in Crete that the German war machine is still licking its wounds? Or is the Syrian intrusion only a blind, as a Turkish critic suggested, to cover up the real Nazi designs in Egypt? The comment coming from Rome and Berlin is very curious. This affair is purely between the ex-Allies, we have nothing to do with it,—said one commentator; while another lamented that the Vichy opposition is lacking sufficient energy and clarity. This suggests that the Nazis have not made up their mind and that they hardly expected Britain to take such an initiative at this hour.

I think that this is the most momentous initiative Britain has taken in the present war and for that reason the most welcome. It has been said that Britain has been only fighting a rearguard action since the war began. This criticism is unfortunately amply justified, whatever may be the extenuating circumstances. Always and everywhere it was so long Hitler who thought ahead and struck first. From Norway to Crete, the initiative has always been in the hands of the Nazis. Even in Iraq, whatever action Britain took was forced upon her and Hitler must have been sorely sorry with the impetuosity of his protege, Rashid Ali.

In Syria the first blow is Britain's. The offensive is in British hands and Hitler seems to be for the first time caught napping. Technically it is an invasion of a neutral country by Britain and though a number of high-souled purists bewail this action on principle, I unhesitatingly hail it. The British Government was placed in a terrible dilemma and even if Vichy declares war for this "act of aggression" and aligns herself openly on the side of the Nazis, this Syrian invasion will be warmly applauded by the historian of

the future, not merely for its immediate strategic considerations but as the turning point in the war, when Britain switched from the defensive to the offensive.

*June 20, 1941*

It has been a week of hopes and disappointments, alarms and excursions, not to mention that colossal hoax of the fifteen-point German invasion of Russia's eastern frontier.

To begin with Syria, the Allied progress there is unaccountably, even painfully, slow. The British and Free French forces made a five-sided thrust in that French mandated territory in the early hours of Sunday, June 8. To-day, twelve days after, while they have advanced beyond Sidon on the coast and up to Damascus, in the centre, the campaign is still in its preliminary stages. The walls of Vichy have not fallen in spite of the trumpet blast of General de Gaulle. It was made very clear at the outset by the Allied High Command that no Blitzkrieg was being launched in Syria. Persuasion and appeal was to be the open sesame to the resistance of the French and colonial troops under General Dentz, the Vichy High Commissioner. But behind those fair words were the big battalions under General Wilson and Catroux. General Wavell, the Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, significantly observed in his proclamation on the eve of the invasion: "We have come in considerable force and any resistance on your part would be useless. We know you would fight like heroes, but without hope."

The general impression was that, in the first place, the invaders had assembled such an overwhelming force around Syria that the ill-equipped and demoralised troops under General Dentz would be cowed into submission without much struggle. Secondly, the earlier reports from Syria repeatedly referred to

the defection of Vichy units to the Allies and this movement was expected to gain momentum every day. Thirdly and finally, it was believed that the solemn promise of independence to their country would encourage the Syrians to rise in revolt against their present rulers. One is constrained to note, after watching the Syrian scene for the last twelve days, that all those earlier assumptions were exaggerated, if not altogether unwarranted. The Allied penetration is painfully slow. British troops were reported to have marched up to 15 miles from Damascus on June 10, i.e., within three days of the start of the operations. To-day, on June 20, they have yet to capture that strategic city. For days we have been reading that they are knocking on the gates of the Syrian capital: they seem to have a velvet glove on their knuckles!

Nor are the Vichy troops—comprising of regulars, colonials and the celebrated Foreign Legions—half so demoralised as they were believed to be. They actually drove out the Allies from Quinetra (since re-occupied by British troops) and the fortress of Kheim. They apparently still hold a few positions right on the Palestine border. The Special Correspondent at Jerusalem of the London *Times* cabled the other day: "It must be frankly admitted that the fight put up at some points by Vichy troops has been disappointingly tough and has resulted in a regrettable number of casualties on both sides." Coming from such a source and from an observer on the spot, this confession ought to make us revise our earlier views regarding the defenders' power of resistance.

It appears, therefore, that General Wavell must re-orient his strategy if the Syrian campaign is to be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion. One certainly understands how delicate the situation is, as also the reluctance of the Allied High Command to spill more blood than is absolutely essential. But taking a long view of things, it would be actually a mercy to the French troops if they are crushed in the mini-

mum time, even if the maximum force has to be utilised for that purpose. It is stressing the obvious to say that the real enemy of Britain even on the soil of Syria is Germany and not Vichy France. General Dentz and his masters are ostensibly fighting for the integrity of French territory but in reality they are waging an undeclared war on behalf of Hitler.

Why then this exaggerated scrupulousness, when once the momentous decision to cross the Rubicon was taken? It has been made very clear by now that Vichy is not merely making a demonstration for her honour but fighting in right earnest. Why should not then Britain throw away the velvet glove and deal a straight one with the iron hand? For some inexplicable reasons Hitler has not taken a hand in the struggle in Syria. But this does not mean either that he is disinterested in its outcome or that he is enjoying a holiday. While Damascus is being ceremoniously approached, Hitler has brought off a first-class diplomatic coup in the Turco-German Pact. This might have been in gestation for a very long time but its actual signing has had an electric effect on international opinion.

There is a welcome set-off to this sorry tale of hesitation and dilatoriness in Syria. Whether it was a local offensive or something more serious, the action which was fought in the Sollum-Capuzzo-Hell Fire Pass triangle in Libya in the first half of this week had a far-reaching strategic significance. In the German pincer movement on Suez, General Rommel's forces in the Western Desert represented the major arm. That Italo-German army has been marking time on the frontier of Egypt for a pretty long time now. Opposite it is entrenched the flower of the Imperial Army under General Wavell with the deep and formidable defences of Mersa Matruh behind it. And like a thorn in the Axis side is Tobruk, where the Australians have dug themselves in. It has been long apparent that the real war would be fought in the

Western Desert. Syria was essentially a subsidiary theatre of war, though the occupation of the Aegean Islands and the capture of Crete had suddenly invested it with a new vital importance. With the amazing reluctance of Hitler to help Vichy or at least to take an active part in the fighting in Syria, it was obvious to every onlooker that he would concentrate his striking power on the Libyan front.

During the last two months, while the Mediterranean Fleet was busy in the evacuations from Greece and Crete, considerable reinforcements in men and material are reported to have been landed in Libya. All the indications were that a grand offensive would be soon launched. It is against this background that we must view last week's spirited engagements. True that the British forces came out second best from those encounters and that they did not succeed in dislodging General Rommel from Fort Capuzzo or Sollum. But the very fact that General Wavell anticipated the Nazi action is full of meaning. The best reply for an offensive is another offensive. It catches the enemy unawares and upsets his plans. The three-day battle will thus have an important bearing upon future developments. It is very likely that it has staved off an attack in force on Tobruk, without the seizure of which Rommel will not be able to launch his Blitzkrieg on Egypt. Above everything else it is a fine testimony to the morale and strength of the Imperial Army.

I observed above that the Turco-German Pact has had an electric effect upon world opinion. But to one who has closely followed the Turkish foreign policy since the beginning of war, it hardly comes as a surprise. The Germans may hail it as a triumph of their diplomacy but really speaking it is a triumph only for Turkey's *Realpolitik*. Ineunu, Saydam and Sarajoglu have really been more clever than Hitler, Ribbentrop and their spokesman in Ankara, the slick von Papen. Nothing is more easy than to defend the Pact from the Turkish point of view—which is after all what

really matters to the Turks. They have followed two fundamental axioms: one, non-involvement in hostilities, and two, safeguarding of their territorial integrity. Whatever pacts they entered into—or quietly jettisoned—followed this Alpha and Omega of their policy.

They simply refused to draw anybody's chestnuts out of the fire—and it must be added in fairness to the memory of the Ataturk that Turkey has been singularly free from the least taint of Imperialism or of aggrandisement at the cost of her neighbours. Alone among the nations of Europe, modern Turkey's escutcheon is free from any blemish in this respect. It cannot be gainsaid that Turkey has not always strictly followed the terms of the various pacts she entered into. According to the Anglo-French-Turkish Pact of 1939, for example, Turkey ought to have joined her Allies as a belligerent when Italy entered war in June 1940. She didn't—and on very good grounds too. It was *Realpolitik*.

I am, therefore, amused at the attempts that are being made to draw some consolation from or to plead some apology for the latest Turco-German Pact. The preamble to the Treaty certainly and specifically safeguards Turkey's existing obligations to Britain. But they never amounted to much in action—and neither does this pact! The realists, who are at the helm of Turkey, know this too well. In the Anglo-Turkish Pact, they stressed their friendship with the Soviet and in the Turco-German Pact, they are reserving their commitments to Britain. If Stalin offers them a new pact, I am quite sure that they will therein solemnly mention their bindings both to Britain and Germany. Turkey, in other words, wants to live in peace with all the world. It is her misfortune that that world cannot live at peace with itself. She refuses to be involved in anybody's quarrels and will brook no interference with her own national integrity. The Turco-German Pact merely underlines this basic fact.

## IX

# INVASION OF RUSSIA

*The danger of war for Russia has increased. The whole nation must hold itself in a state of preparedness. We are facing the danger of military aggression and we must leave no opportunity for our enemies to catch us unawares.*

—Joseph Stalin  
(January 1, 1941)

June 27, 1941

**H**ITLER has followed in the footsteps of Napoleon. Will it be to his Nemesis? Or is Hitler's star, unlike that of Napoleon, when he led his *grande Armee* to its doom in the snows of Russia 129 years ago, still in the ascendant and will it carry him ultimately to the domination of the whole world?

History has an uncanny way of repeating itself and, in spite of the wide divergence between the two personalities, Hitler's career of aggression and conquest has closely followed that of Napoleon. Europe lay at the feet of both and both were baffled by Britain, which proverbially does not know when it is beaten. Both turned in desperation to the East and the historic retreat from Moscow marked the beginning of the end of Napoleon? Will the resemblance hold good still? The war between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander was foreseen for a pretty long time. Not so the present struggle between Hitler and Stalin, the erstwhile "eternal allies". The former was the inevitable result of the Continental System and Napoleon spoke about it as one that lay in the course of Destiny.

In a way, the present invasion of Russia is also the result of the Nazi New Order in Europe—which is nothing but a revised edition of the Napoleonic Continental System—and its reply, the relentless British blockade of the Continent. Hitler, too, has always re-

presented himself as the destined crusader against the godless creed of Bolshevism. But since the signing of the amazing German-Soviet pact at the Kremlin on the 23rd of August 1939, right up to the actual invasion of Russia by "the greatest army assembled ever" in the early hours of Sunday the 22nd of June, 1941, a war between Germany and Russia was something unthinkable. Hitler and Stalin had apparently forgotten their mutual antipathies and become complementary to each other. Their new-found friendship was the epitome of the contradictions of the modern world.

The Fuehrer is, however, always unpredictable. He moves, as his admirers are fond of asserting, with the majestic certainty of the stars. In other words he is above human evaluation, beyond logic. Right and wrong are not terms found in his dictionary. Treachery and deceit are something pathological to him. Cunning and duplicity are his second nature. He is not merely immoral but almost amoral and has proved it again and again during the last decade, while dealing with friend as well as foe. What a pity then that even such a hard-boiled diplomat as M. Molotov should feel like observing in his broadcast on Sunday that "This unheard-of attack on our country is without example in the history of civilised nations." Those words have, indeed, become the refrain of European statesmen from Schuschnigg to Stalin, as one by one they were betrayed and stabbed in the back by Hitler. And still the echoes come!

Hitler, it is said, is a master of surprise. Yet on close analysis how little of a surprise is there in whatever he has done! On the contrary he is a man with an *idee fixe*—that idea being simply the overlordship of the whole world by the German race, with himself as its heaven-sent Fuehrer. Whatever he has done and undone, said and denied, has sprung from the faith in his mission. The end for him has always justified the means howsoever foul and heinous. Never was this inhuman or superhuman (as you look at it)

trait in his character better exemplified than when he harangued his closest friend Captain Roehm for hours on end before he ordered his execution in the notorious blood bath of June 30, 1934.

Or take the present "unheard-of attack" on Russia. You will find it put down in so many words of cold print in a book which was dictated by convict Adolf Hitler to fellow-prisoner Rudolph Hess in the fortress of Landsberg in Bavaria in 1923. That book is now famous as *Mein Kampf*—the Bible of Nazi Germany. Read the following purple passage: "One must not forget that the rulers of present-day Russia are common blood-bespattered criminals, that we are here concerned with a scum of humanity which favoured by conditions at a tragic moment overran a great State, strangled and rooted out millions of its leading intellectual classes in wild thirst for blood, and for nearly ten years now has been carrying the cruellest regime of tyranny of all times." What can the Fuehrer do but launch a holy crusade against those "blood-bespattered criminals"—I ask you!

The Nazi-Soviet relations have thus turned full wheel and returned to 1923 to Hitler's *idee fixe*. What boots it then to point to the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 and to the honeyed words that have flown between Moscow and Berlin during the last 22 months? True, that Pact was hailed as ushering a new era of "eternal friendship" between the two countries. True, Hitler dismissed (less than a year ago) as "infantile", any hope that new German-Russian tension might intervene. But all this was mere patting the back—and in that process Hitler was also feeling for a soft spot to plunge his dagger. The Fuehrer, therefore, was fully justified in ordering German forces "to oppose the Russian menace with all the might at their disposal!"—from the Fuehrer's point of view! To the world at large this came as a literal bolt from the blue, and it unfortunately appears as if the Soviet Govern-

ment, too, were hardly prepared for this shock, even if they were expecting it vaguely.

A Russo-German war was something which one simply could not comprehend at this stage. An ultimate fight to the finish between their two diametrically opposed ideologies—Yes. An immediate struggle—No. A thousand times No. And I have no hesitation in confessing that personally I would have taken a million to one odds against the invasion. Even when I actually read the news, I attributed it to the fertile imagination of some American broadcaster from Ankara and expected its early contradiction as was the case with a similar rumour ten days ago. Not that there were no indications at all of such a move materialising when it did. There were enough and to spare. If the truth must be told, it was Berlin itself which was liberally supplying the news agencies of the world with stories of the impending clash! There was also abundant evidence to support this news lead.

From Finland to Rumania the Nazis were marshalling their legions at all strategic centres on the Russo-German border. German troops in Greece and Yugoslavia were being moved up to the Moldavian frontier. The entire railway system of Rumania was requisitioned by the German Army. There was a surprise meeting between General Antonescu and Hitler, after which the former had become significantly truculent towards Russia. General Rommel is merely marking time in Libya for the last three months, which is something foreign to the German military technique. In Syria, the Vichy Army was left to fight its own war. Above all there has for weeks been a strange lull in the aerial blitz over Britain. Simultaneously with those happening, we were informed that Hitler had made sweeping demands upon Stalin, which, if accepted, would reduce Moscow to the status of Vichy.

As if to make confusion worse confounded, there was also put across the story that Stalin and Hitler would soon be meeting together to forge a new and

closer alliance, by which the former was to be given a free hand in the East, while the latter was to become the *de facto* leader of the West. We are hearing such reports for two months now, while a hundred German divisions were gradually taking their positions across the 1,500 miles stretch from the White to the Black Sea. All along, we considered ourselves too clever and simply refused to believe them. I was erring in good company. Wrote the Ankara correspondent of the *News Chronicle* two weeks ago: "Whereas the Rumanians hope that Germany will attack Russia, it seems more probable that the Nazis are only using the Rumanians to blackmail Moscow." Similarly the *London Times* wrote editorially on June 13: "The care taken to give publicity to the large concentration of German Military power on the Soviet frontier suggests a diplomatic rather than a military offensive."

Apparently there was only one person (apart from Hitler himself) who fully expected the blow to fall. That person is Winston Churchill, who observed in his broadcast on Sunday that he had again and again warned the Soviet Government about those developments—a warning which evidently went unheeded by the inscrutable Stalin. Or did it? There is also the public utterance in a speech delivered in the House of Commons two months ago to substantiate the Premier's prophetic power:—"The war may spread eastwards to Turkey and Russia. The Germans may lay their hands for a time on the granaries of the Ukraine or the oil-wells of the Caucasus. They may dominate the Caspian....Who can tell?"

Why has Hitler taken a step which 999 out of every 1,000 observers thought, he would or should not take? Why has he deliberately decided to wage war on two fronts, a strategy which he has condemned time and again as being responsible for the downfall of Germany in the last war? Why has he added to the host of his enemies a Colossus like Russia? Is it because of his supreme confidence that he will break

the back of the Soviet in a few fell strokes, as he did in the case of a dozen other smaller nations? Has he assured himself by Fifth Column activities that the Colossus has feet of clay and that it cannot stand up to the hammer-blows of the Nazi war machine? Or is it just the last gigantic throw of a desperate gambler? Win all or lose all! If he comes through successfully, he becomes the undisputed master of Europe and in due time of the world. If he perishes in the attempt, his name will go down in the Nordic Valhalla as the Supreme Crusader Of All Time.

Leaving aside the causes which may have actually impelled Hitler to deliver the present attack, what are the deductions to be drawn from it? Firstly, it is a virtual confession that he cannot launch the much-boosted invasion of Britain under the present circumstances. Secondly, it also indicates that he is equally diffident of bringing Britain quickly to its knees in the Middle or Near East. In other words, the Russian campaign is by itself a great tribute to British resistance. Thirdly, it suggests that the British blockade is telling very severely on the Reich. Hitler is probably nearing the end of his resources and unless he seizes the wheat of Ukraine, the oil of Baku and the ores of the Caucasus, he cannot continue the war for any length of time. Fourthly, it reveals that the 1939 Pact has been of less economic advantage to Germany than it has been to Russia politically.

Fifthly, there might be some truth in the reports of a difference of opinion between Hitler's military and political advisers. General Keitel is said to have overruled Ribbentrop in this connection. The former has two million soldiers under him, who must have new worlds to conquer, if they are to be saved the boredom and war-weariness of the barracks. Keitel is profiting from Gamelin's bitter experience last year. The broad and rolling plains of the Ukraine with their ripening wheat sheaves are simply inviting the greedy Panzer Korps, which are resting—and rusting—for a

year now. The thirsty Luftwaffe, in its turn, is casting a longing look at the bubbling oil-wells of Baku. If but they can possess these, they can defy the whole world, let alone Britain and the United States, to do its worst;—so reason Keitel and Goering. And Hitler knows that he who rides the tiger cannot dismount!

Sixthly and finally, the present campaign has capital propaganda value in Germany itself. The morale of the German people is lately showing definite signs of cracking. They have won one success after another but peace is yet nowhere in sight. What fruit victory?—they are probably asking. For them their Fuehrer has now donned the shining armour of a Grand Crusader Against Bolshevism—which is so much dope—to deaden their brains. If he can pull off one more triumph—well, it will be the very paradise for the famished people of the Reich. Hitler probably hoped to “sell” this crusade stunt not only at home but also abroad. He knows very well that the ruling classes of Britain and the capitalist bosses of the United States have very little love lost for the Soviet. If he could confuse and divide world opinion, he would have won half the war. There was also the ostensible support of Finland, the Baltic and the Balkan States to represent the invasion as meant for the deliverance of the small nations of Europe from Russian aggression. Even Turkey’s benevolent neutrality was vouchsafed in advance firstly by the Turco-German Pact, and secondly by the astute disclosure of the Soviet’s demands on the Dardanelles.

Churchill, however, was too shrewd for Hitler and he swiftly removed the fuse from Hitler’s diplomatic time-bomb before it could do any damage. “This is not a class war”, he observed categorically in his broadcast speech on Sunday. “We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us, nothing.” This was a most timely and firm lead not only for Britain and its allies in arms but also for the United States, where

there was a distinct danger of divergence of opinion. It is most gratifying to find that President Roosevelt, too, has promptly assured all aid to Russia. Hitler's devilishly ingenious diplomatic offensive, at any rate, has been definitely smashed. Whether the Red Army can resist, if not smash, the Blitzkrieg itself remains to be seen.

*July 4, 1941*

Hitler has apparently succeeded in following his time-table in the first 12 days of his Blitzkrieg against the Soviet. It will be remembered that he observed on the eve of the invasion that he hoped to conclude the Russian campaign in 10 weeks.

In the welter of claims and counter-claims it is difficult to draw an exact picture of the present military situation. It is obvious, however, that not only have the Soviet forces been compelled to evacuate the territory annexed to Russia during the last two years (except Bessarabia) but that the fighting is now developing well within the pre-September 1939 frontier. The Nazi strategy is following the now familiar lines. They have deployed 170 divisions all along the 1,500 mile border between the two countries and the forces of Finland, Rumania and Hungary are also at the Axis disposal. The Nazi forces claim to have crossed the Dvina in a number of places and also the river Pruth.

Stubborn fighting is taking place in the region of Minsk, the Nazis claiming that the battle east of Bialystok has proved one of "annihilation" of the enemy. The Panzer divisions from the sector are striking straight into the heart of Russia, Moscow being their main objective. From Moscow they plan to turn north-west to Leningrad thus making a vast encircling move against the entire Russian army on the Baltic front. Similarly in the south-east the Nazi forces which have captured Luck are heading towards Kiev,

the capital of Ukraine, with a view to march South towards Odessa thus enveloping Bessarabia in a huge semi-circle. The successes so far achieved by the Nazis are no doubt spectacular, but the very fantastic claims of Soviet losses—5,774 armoured cars, 2,230 guns and anti-aircraft guns, 4,725 planes and 160,000 prisoners in 10 days!—made by the German High Command are the measure of the heroic resistance of the Red Army.

"How could it have happened that our glorious Red Army has surrendered to Fascist troops in a number of towns?"—so asked Stalin in his much-awaited broadcast on Thursday morning. That question has been on the lips of most of us ever since the beginning of hostilities. Whatever one may have to say of the poor show made by the Red Army in the Finnish War, Herculean efforts have been made since then to put it on a modern efficient basis. The reverses sustained so far can be explained only on one ground—that this attack from an "eternal ally" was not at all expected by Russia's rulers. And strange as it may appear, this was the defence put forth by Stalin who said that as against German divisions which stood in full readiness to await the signal for the offensive, the Soviet troops had still to be mobilised and moved to the frontier!

This admission, while it indicates that Stalin was completely duped by Hitler in the diplomatic sphere in spite of the frequent warnings of Churchill, conveys a timely assurance regarding future military operations. "The main forces of the Red Army provided with thousands of tanks and aircraft," said Stalin, "are entering into action. Our resistance to the enemy increases. The entire Soviet people is rising in the defence of the Fatherland at the side of the Red Army."

It should be noted that the war is being fought on the Russian soil proper and it is well-known that the frontier is heavily fortified in depth. After the fate of the Maginot Line, one dares not talk too confidently of the Stalin Line, which stretches the whole

length of the Baltic and the Balkan border. Let us not go to the other extreme, however, and ignore its presence altogether. The Stalin Line may prove vulnerable to the Nazi onslaught. But not so the Stalin Spirit of the men and women of the U.S.S.R. (Stalin, by the way, means "Man of Steel"). They are defending not only the Fatherland—so many thousand square miles of the earth—but also a new way of living built out of the struggles and sufferings of half a century. What is at stake to-day is not only national territory, not only national freedom as we know it, but also an ideology. "It is a question of life and death for the Soviet State and people," said Stalin and appealed to the whole nation to organise itself for the great struggle that lies ahead. He represented the present struggle as a part of the war of liberation that is going on all over Europe and thus broadbased it on an international foundation.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good and one consolation that can be drawn from the present catastrophe is that Russia will henceforth take its proper place in the comity of nations. Particularly the present improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations is much to be welcomed. Stalin's response to Churchill's "historic speech" is most gratifying and "the united front of peoples who stand for freedom" will have a bearing not only on the future developments of war but also on post-war reconstruction. Hitler has achieved at one stroke what Litvinov and Sir Stafford Cripps failed to do in years and whatever one may say of Germany's military successes, she has received a crushing defeat in the diplomatic field.—Hitler's "cru-  
sade against Communism" bomb having proved a complete dud!

The first tidal victories of the Nazis were generally anticipated and they need not cause any undue alarm. But what of the future? The war has now entered upon a new phase, "The Fatherland Phase", reminiscent of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. Stalin con-

fidently predicted that Hitler's armies would be beaten like Napoleon's and he advised the adoption of the same tactics which were so successfully employed by his predecessors and are now perfected by the gallant Chinese people. Unbearable conditions must be created for the enemy and all his accomplices in the invaded areas. Nothing animate or inanimate must be left behind, which is likely to prove of the least help to the invaders. Guerilla warfare must be adopted on a mass scale and all means of transport and communications must be demolished wholesale. Then there are the vast spaces of Russia into which the defenders can retreat and the invader can be lured—to his doom.

The main thing is not to lose the national morale and from what one knows of the Soviet, the people may be trusted to maintain it, however grievous their defeats and losses. A word of caution, however, is necessary. And it is this that war in 1941 is not what it was in 1812. Time and space have a different meaning to Hitler than what they had to Napoleon. The vast distances of Russia have shrunk with the internal combustion engine. The aeroplane can maintain communications over the most difficult terrain and during the most vile weather. There is far less danger of the Panzer Divisions being bogged like the old cavalry in the snows of Russia. They can be destroyed only by bigger tanks and swifter planes. Let us remember the fate of "General Mud" of Poland and "General Dyke" of Holland and not put too much blind faith in "General Space" of Russia!

How is Britain going to avail itself of the present miraculous opportunity? That this respite will be utilised in a new armament drive is evident from Lord Beaverbrook's new appointment as the Supply Minister. After the wonders he did for aircraft production, the "Beaver" may be trusted to infuse a new life into the armament and munition factories of Britain. This will have a vital bearing when Hitler resumes his invasion plan with redoubled fury. Britain will need

all the guns and planes and tanks and ships she can produce now, in that final phase of war. This long-term view is certainly justified but it is equally true that Britain ought not to assume purely a passive role in the present fighting. Hitler must not be allowed to get away with one-front operations. He must be made to realise unmistakably that he has to wage a war as much on his western as his eastern front, even though Britain has no foothold left on the continent to-day to launch a land offensive.

The R.A.F. is extremely busy with daylight raids over occupied France, Holland and Germany. A greater weight of bombs is said to have been dropped on Germany in two weeks of June than in the whole month of April, though the former is the worst period for night raids. Those aerial attacks have certainly inflicted considerable damage on German war machine. But the very fact that the British raiders are not receiving the expected opposition indicates that the harm done is not serious enough in the Nazi estimation. The raids must be so intensified that in sheer self-protection Goering is obliged to call back a number of the Luftwaffe squadrons which he has let loose on Russia. Similarly, there is no reason why, if unfortunately Britain is not in a position to launch a counter-invasion of Europe, she should not adopt guerilla tactics and land a few raiding parties in Holland or France or Norway, as she did so successfully in the Lofoten Islands. Apart from their practical value such surprise landings will have the greatest psychological effect upon the enslaved people of Europe. The nuisance value of such raids at any rate cannot be exaggerated.

Hitler's pre-occupation in Russia again provides a capital opportunity to launch an offensive in Libya and to drive out the Germans altogether from North Africa. What the Allies lost during the Greek Campaign can be made good now. The overdrawn Syrian interlude ought also to be brought to as speedy a con-

clusion as possible. Further, as the *Manchester Guardian* put it, "we should pluck the Mediterranean rose-buds while we may"—meaning that Crete, Dodecanese and other Aegean Islands ought to be given an immediate plastering. All those tactics are evidently intended to compel Hitler to distribute his Panzer Divisions and Luftwaffe squadrons in every theatre of hostilities. Following the usual Nazi practice Hitler seems to have concentrated his striking power on the Eastern Front and the more the diversions Britain can create, the bigger the corresponding relief to the sorely pressed Russians.

July 11, 1941

The latest—and briefest—Soviet war communique indicates that the Nazi drive into Russia has been brought to a standstill along the whole of the two-thousand-mile front from the Arctic to the Black Sea. On the other hand, a special communique, issued by the German High Command yesterday night, claims that with the conclusion of the double battle of Bialystok and Minsk, the greatest amount of war material in world history has been captured! You may add up those two communiqes and divide the sum by four to arrive somewhere near the truth, which is what?—as the Jesting Pilate asked.

In other words, it is an extraordinarily difficult and complicated job to find what exactly is happening in the gigantic Battle of Rivers that began last week. It is now three weeks since Hitler invaded Russia and it is evident that his armies have penetrated pretty deep within the Soviet territory. But they have not so far reached Moscow as the Nazi propagandists bragged they would do, nor Leningrad, nor even Kiev. The Red Army has retreated along the whole frontier. It has also certainly suffered enormous losses in men and *materiel*. This is understandable considering the

huge and terrible striking power of the Nazis and in view of the fact that the Soviet was hardly prepared for this stab in the back from its "eternal ally". The advantage always lies with the aggressor.

The Red Army has no doubt retreated; but it has retreated in good order and in good heart, with its morale intact and its courage undimmed. It is a retreat on a set plan and with a set purpose. It is not a rout as in France, thirteen months ago. Behind it remain not prosperous villas, factories in production and well-filled petrol pumps on the road-side from which the Nazi Juggernaut may quench its thirst, but burning cities, demolished factories, dynamited bridges, smouldering crops and razed villages. Everything is in ruins. The very earth lies scorched....

The Red Army has no doubt retreated. But it seems to have absorbed the first terrific impact of the Mechanized Attila, the stunning shock of the Blitzkrieg. It has inflicted as well as received punishment. It has retreated but it has never been on the defensive. It has hit out wherever it could. And, above all, it is in being still as the Red Army—not as a rabble of soldiers. It is in being and fighting not merely on its own front and within its own territory but also in the areas occupied by the German forces. The so-called "pockets" of Soviet resistance, which are still plentifully dispersed all along the two-thousand-mile frontier, are not sitting dazed and resigned, waiting for being mopped up by their conquering enemies but they are fighting with a dogged, death-defying bravery wherever they can, howsoever they can. Note this well when you read about the rapid advance of the German army. Note that "Retreat" in the Russian vocabulary does not mean a dire disaster but a very potent weapon. They "retreated" before Napoleon 129 years ago, until they sent him retreating back—minus his entire *Grande Armee!* Times have changed but the first principles of strategy remain the same.

That the Panzer Divisions are not finding it a cake-walk as heretofore is evident from the comments of the German press itself. It reported, while discussing the advance across the Pruth, for example, that "there is heavy fighting due to the extent and modernity of the Soviet equipment, the unshakable obstinacy of the Soviet defence and the difficulties of the terrain, as the river is bordered by mile-wide marshes." This is, to put it very mildly, a very unusual and strange thing for the regimented and Gobbelins-inspired press of the Reich to say. There is another very important point to note. It is this that in spite of its furious onslaught, the Luftwaffe has so far not been able to establish its supremacy in the Soviet sky. This supremacy has been the condition precedent of every success which Hitler has scored from Norway to Crete. The German propaganda bureau may broadcast fantastic reports of Russia's air losses but the Soviet Air Force is yet very much alive—and kicking. As long as the German Eagle does not succeed in clipping the wings of the Russian Bear, there is no early prospect—or even remote hope—of victory for the Nazis.

The most important event of the last week happened, however, neither in Russia nor in Syria, not in Europe or Asia or Africa. It was far away from any theatre of war, far from the roar of guns and the thud of bombs. The hot spot of the last week was in fact a frozen island in the Atlantic, an island remote and peaceful, an island which few foreigners visit and fewer natives ever leave. In the dawn of history Iceland was famous for its Viking heroes. Once again after centuries, greatness is thrust upon it by the United States Marines, who landed and occupied it at the beginning of the last week.

The occupation was most peaceful and most orderly. In fact Uncle Sam is in the position of an honoured guest. The Prime Minister of Iceland not only invited the American but asked him to come in

such overwhelming force that nobody else would ever dare gate-crash the family party! In the grisly annals of the Second World War, this little Icelandic saga will go down as one of its most relieving features. Not the less important for that, however. It is indeed an event of the utmost significance and one which will have a decisive—even vital—bearing on the future developments of war.

The strategic importance of Iceland can be seen by a glance at the map. With Hitler master of the Old World, it is a stepping stone in his march to the New. For Britain, its seizure by the Nazis would have been like a pistol aimed at its head. That is why it was occupied by it no sooner the Blitzkrieg began in 1940. Like the despatch of troops to Iraq, the occupation of Iceland will go down in the history of this war as one of the few—very few!—occasions where the British High Command proved too quick for its German opposites.

There is a world of difference between the British and the American occupation (at present it is joint) of this most strategic outpost of both the hemispheres. For Britain it was a normal, if clever, move in the war game. It caused either satisfaction or resentment. But not any undue surprise. But for the United States Marines to land in Iceland means that we are standing at a turning point in history. The American occupation of Iceland, like the Nazi invasion of Russia, is a climacteric of war. And perhaps the former is a direct consequence of the latter—a consequence which Hitler could have hardly foreseen.

His “campaign against communism” may be meant for wheat and oil, but one of its subsidiary purposes was also to placate the good and god-fearing citizens of America. It was fervently hoped that this pious crusade of Herr Hitler will strengthen the hands of Isolationists, if not wean away the capitalists from that war-mongering President. For a time it was

feared that the Fuehrer would once again get away with his insidious stunt. He caught "a big one" in ex-President Hoover. "Copperhead" Lindbergh, too, was duly impressed. There was a perceptible concern in high Washington circles over the latest trend of public opinion. The concern was reflected even in the brief and unusually tame address delivered by the President of the United States on Independence Day (July 4). That speech came as an anti-climax to the clarion call to arms of his Secretary of the Navy, which was delivered only four days earlier. It caused profound disappointment, even apprehension throughout the world.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was, however, feinting last Friday. The consummate master of statecraft that he has proved himself to be, Roosevelt was only biding his time, confidently awaiting that "flash" to come from distant Iceland, which was to signalise the end, not of neutrality (for America was never neutral) but of the non-belligerency of the United States in the present war. By sending his troops to Iceland, F.D.R. has virtually thrown his hat in the war ring and challenged the Axis boys to pick up the gauntlet. Uncle Sam will never go to war. No, Sir! But who dares go to war with him?—That is what the President of the United States wants to know.

That is the plain meaning of the American occupation of Iceland. The purists of international law may say what they like but every realist in America and outside knows it. Roosevelt knows this, though he is too shrewd to say it. Hitler knows this though he is apparently too scared to admit it. And Churchill, too, knows this. What is more, he confessed as much in the most Churchillian manner possible. Never have I enjoyed a Churchill speech more than the one he delivered in the Parliament on Wednesday last. It was punctuated by laughter in the Commons, the echoes of which are still coming from the four quarters of the world. Mr. Churchill began with his

tongue very much in the cheek. But by the time he finished, he was more cheek than Churchill!

What will be the result of the American occupation of Iceland? Will the shooting start? Will Roosevelt step from Iceland to Azores, Cape Verde, Dakar or Ireland—ultimately landing once again in Flanders fields, where still the poppies grow? What will be the reply of Fuehrer Hitler to President Roosevelt, “the Ally of Bolshevism, the Yankee Imperialist who raped small nations on the European continent and drove his own nation and the American countries into a fateful policy from which no power on earth can absolve him of responsibility?” Must I add that I am quoting a Nazi paper? It is none less than the *Diplomatische Korrespondentz*, the official organ of the Wilhemstrasse.

July 18, 1941

The Russo-German war is nearing the close of its fourth week and the Nazis claim to have occupied Smolensk yesterday. This represents their deepest penetration in the heart of the Soviet territory so far and they are now within two hundred and fifty miles of Moscow.

In the north, fighting is still going on in the Pskov-Porhov sector, while in the south, the Germans have not yet succeeded in capturing Kiev, in spite of the renewed offensive they launched along the whole front on Sunday last. The Soviet war “communiqué” issued this morning denies “any important change in the disposition of our troops on the front.” The thrust at Smolensk nevertheless indicates a danger-signal unless the Nazi advance towards the capital and the nerve centre of the U.S.S.R. is halted in time. That the Red Army is fighting with incredible gallantry though it was caught unawares and unprepared is admitted by the enemy himself and in spite of the reverses it has suffered so far, it is yet full of fighting.

The very fact that the German High Command had to pause and take a second wind before launching this second desperate offensive has a moral of its own. Never have the Panzer divisions suffered such severe casualties since the war began, as in the first two weeks of the attack on Russia. It has been computed that while the German mechanised units advanced at a rate of 20 miles a day on the Leningrad and Moscow roads and 10 miles a day towards Kiev during the first week, their progress was slowed down to 7½ miles a day on the Leningrad Road and to 4 miles a day in the other sectors during the succeeding 12 days. They were indeed compelled to remain stationary for five or six days before they resumed their fresh advance last Sunday.

Compare this with what happened in France last year. The spearhead of the German army made a dent at Sedan in the Allied lines on May 15, 1940. That dent became a bulge, developed into a salient and ended in a catastrophic break-through—all within the course of three days! Within nine days the Germans were in possession of the Channel ports. Paris fell undefended on June 14 and three days after, Marshal Petain sued for armistice! All was thus over with the vaunted might of France within exactly a month and a day. Note moreover that France had eight months to prepare its defences and a great ally like Britain standing shoulder to shoulder. The invasion of Russia was a surprise stab in the back of an avowed ally. The Red Army is fighting single-handed not merely against Hitler's Germany which is at the peak of its power to-day but also against numerous Nazi stooges and jackals.

Italy, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland—all are trying to get a bite at the Russian Bear, while a subservient (Franco) Spain and a fawning (Vichy) France are reported to have raised special Legions to take part in "the crusade against Communism!" While standing unflinchingly against heavy odds, the Soviet

is not unfortunately in a position to receive any direct help from its allies. Britain's aerial "invasion" of the Reich may have its value in the long run but it affords little immediate relief to the hard-pressed Soviet forces, though there are reports that Goering has been obliged to order a number of his crack fighter squadrons (including the famous Richtofen) back to the Western Front.

We have to note all this before striking the balance-sheet of four weeks of the Russo-German war. The part played so far by the Red Army has been magnificent and if it can maintain its entity and its morale for another four weeks, it will have passed the worst crisis. It has suffered grievous losses but it has escaped encirclement. The Soviet Air Force claims to have taken the "Blitz" out of the Blitzkrieg, while the Soviet Navy rendered an excellent account of itself by sinking a number of German warships and transports last week. One need not be unduly impressed, therefore, by the reverses which the Soviet has so far suffered in the field. According to his original calendar, Hitler ought to have been in the Kremlin by now. On the contrary he is finding the present campaign "like those Russian novels, where each chapter seems to bring you nearer the end, but continues interminably," as General de Gaulle strikingly put it. And finally let us not forget that the worst disasters of Napoleon came after and not before his victorious march into Moscow.

During the last week, Japan passed through one more of those crises, to which we have become so accustomed during the last two years. Those Nipponese alarms and excursions have indeed become a chronic feature of Far Eastern politics ever since the Chinese "incident" began four years ago. But custom has not staled their infinite variety. Or their nuisance value either. In the middle of the last week, the Japanese Cabinet resigned *en bloc* in order "to make room for a stronger Government to cope with the national and

international situation." It was generally believed that the extremist section would assume power and that the long-threatened show-down would be immediately staged in the Pacific. Only the name of the ex-Foreign Minister is, however, conspicuous by its absence in the new Government formed by Prince Konoye. It is the old mixture under a new label.

There is little to choose between Japan's Fascist-politicians. The difference is one of degree and not of kind. Each one of them aspires to be the Strong Man not only of Japan but of the Far East; each one of them believes implicitly in Tokyo's leadership of Asia; none of them has any love lost for democracy; and all of them are willing to wound but afraid to strike. Matsuoka is one of the more clever sort of Japan's New Order politicians. His adroitness and his European contacts have long marked him as the up-and-coming man of Japan. In fact his admirers hail him as the budding Fuehrer of the Far East. His custodianship of the Foreign Office has, however, left his country in a pretty bad mess and his exit is not altogether unexpected.

Hitler has duped Japan's rulers again and again. He played upon their fear of Russia and hatred of communism and drew them into the Axis net. He pampered their ambitions of Japan's hegemony of the East and promised them the whole of Asia as their exclusive *lebensraum*. The Japanese swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker and began to talk big. They were no longer content with China and cast longing looks towards the rich South. Came one fine morning in August, 1939 the news of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and with it a rude shock to Japanese diplomacy. Tokyo felt benumbed for a while by the spectre of its new friend and old enemy shaking hands, but it had gone too far to retrace its steps. The swift German victory over Poland had to be taken into consideration and Britain's preoccupation in the West gave Japan a golden opportunity to smash and grab in

the East. The cataclysmic events that happened in Europe in the middle of 1940 confirmed the wisdom of their Axis alliance and a full-fledged Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan was signed a year ago. Not only were the remaining scruples about the Nazi-Soviet Pact swallowed but Hitler prevailed upon Japanese politicians to make their own peace with the Soviet and thus usher a new era.

Mr. Matsuoka will long repent his visit to Europe in the beginning of this year. He was feted, feasted—and fooled!—both in Berlin and Moscow. He took the tip from Wilhelmstrasse and signed an agreement in the Kremlin. So pleased was Stalin about it that he publicly and ostentatiously embraced Matsuoka in farewell on the Moscow Station. The Foreign Minister had done a smart job and the Japanese Government proceeded to draw blue-prints of their drive to the South. Their rear in the North was secure, thanks to Matsuoka and they were even prepared to cut out their Chinese commitments for fresh fields and pastures new. Indo-China, Thailand, Dutch East Indies, the Malay Peninsula and the not-so-distant India. It was a glittering prospect for the heroic descendants of the Samurai. Matsuoka's stock was soaring sky-high. He got himself photographed in his new splendour and forwarded autographed copies to Stalin and Molotov, Hitler and Ribbentrop—"from your most loving friend...."

Before the parcels reached their destinations, Hitler had completed his second double-cross. A million German soldiers marched to extirpate "the godless regime of that cut-throat Stalin" on June 22nd, 1941.... and Konoye, Matsuoka and Co. blinked and blinked!

Under the Axis alliance, Japan is under no obligation to join her partners in a war against Russia, while under the Soviet-Japanese Pact, Japan is expected to remain a neutral in any war in which Russia may be involved. So theoretically Japan remains the friend of both! The Imperial Japanese Cabinet went

in a non-stop session for ten days immediately after the Nazi invasion of Russia to figure out what is what and came out—minus Matsuoka—to mark time where it was! Their attitude will continue to be one of “vigilance and preparedness”, whatever that may mean.

I feel profound sympathy for the Japanese Government in its present predicament. If Germany defeats Russia, the Big Bully of Berlin will be too near to be comfortable. May he not have his own designs on the rubber and oil and tin of the south Pacific Islands? And has not Hitler written something in his Bible about the Yellow Peril?

On the other hand if Russia holds out, it means the ultimate and complete defeat of Germany. What then becomes of the Axis and of all the ambitions which Japan has hugged to its bosom all those years? Will Japan then take the plunge right now, as Berlin has been goading it to do all those months? Will she strike South or North?

There is the A.B.C.D. front in the South and Japan cannot stand the combined might of America, Britain, China and the Dutch East Indies. The semi-Arctic North hardly tempts the Japanese soldiers and the Soviet has even now maintained an independent army for such an eventuality. Finally, how long can they mark time when the Chinese dragon is unrelentingly sucking the life-blood of the Land of the Rising Sun? No wonder Japan is finding herself all at sea. Her rulers are not merely puzzled but scared. Those who are feeling reassured regarding the situation in the Far East by the return of Prince Konoye and the formation of his “watch-and-wait” Cabinet should not lose sight of this pathological factor.

*July 25, 1941*

In whose hands is Smolensk? Did the Germans occupy it on July 16 as frequently claimed in their war

communiques or is it still in Russian hands as Reuter's and other correspondents in Moscow assert?

That is the big mystery of the last week, a mystery moreover, which is symptomatic of the recent developments on the Russo-German front. The German High Command laconically reports day after day that the operations of the German armed forces and their allies are proceeding according to plan on the whole Eastern Front. On the other hand, the Soviet headquarters stress the gallant resistance of the Red Army in every sector and even mention repeated counter-attacks. The place-names in the news remain mostly what they were last week. This indicates that though the German advance units may have penetrated deeper here and there, by and large the situation continues to be static for the last eight days. In other words, the second offensive which was launched by the Nazis on the 13th inst. has proved singularly barren, in spite of the initial thrust made towards Moscow.

Not only that but it seems as if the momentum of the new offensive is exhausting itself. Even if we take for granted that Smolensk is in German hands, Leningrad and Kiev (let alone Moscow) are certainly not. Note that the Russo-German war is nearing the end of the fifth week and the above-mentioned key objectives were to be captured within three weeks according to the Blitzkrieg blue-prints. The communiques issued from Hitler's head-quarters provide by themselves an unmistakable pointer to the fact that the time-table of the Russo-German campaign is badly upset. "Operations proceeding according to plan," is a very vague formula; it may mean anything or nothing. Its frequent repetition is a virtual confession of failure.

The present announcements appear all the more strange when we remember that the communiques issued last year, when the Nazi steam-roller was crashing through Western Europe, were prompt, precise and

generally fair. There was no need then to extemporize and prevaricate in view of the rapid succession of unrelieved victories. But now it seems the situation is altogether different. There is more of wishful thinking (as in the case of Smolensk) than actual accomplishment to broadcast. This does not mean that the Nazis have lost their grip on the war or that they are facing an early defeat. It would be foolish to think so. The initiative is yet in German hands and the Russians are everywhere on the defensive, even though it may be a dynamic defensive. The threat to Leningrad, Kiev and even Moscow remains still and one need not be at all surprised if these cities are sooner or later captured by the Germans.

What matters is that the 'Blitz' is taken out of the Blitzkrieg by the Soviet forces. The Red Army is fighting every inch of the way and even when the spear-head of the Panzer units may have pierced the lines, the defenders on either side and even behind carry on undaunted their work of destruction. Whole battalions of infantry have been annihilated in this manner by what were just considered to be trapped troops. They turned out in fact to be deadly guerillas, unorthodox but very much effective in their tactics. The Nazis, it is amusing to note, are making a capital grievance out of this Soviet strategy. They do not mind so much the tough resistance of the opponents face to face. But when those damned Bolshies get behind one's back,—well! one can't help getting the creeps! They are here, there and everywhere; the so-called pockets of resistance having proved so many hidden dynamite charges. It was noted by a Swedish military observer that in the Russian campaign there is not the sort of geographical or chronological connection hitherto known in warfare.

How harassing the guerilla tactics is proving to the German forces was admitted by the German Radio commentator himself soon after the war began. Explaining the slow tempo of Nazi advance in Russia he

observed: "The difference between the Polish and Western campaigns of 1939-40 and the present campaign against the Soviet Union is that almost everywhere and continuously fights with enemy formations flare up behind our lines. These battles have been fought in addition to the main battle, and, although it can be done with the use of reinforcements, it nevertheless imposes a strain on our forces." Coming from Berlin it is high testimony indeed. This comment was made three weeks ago. Since then the "strain" has increased considerably and it is telling rather severely upon the Nazi morale. The rumours about the removal of Generals Brauchitsch and Keitel from the direction of operations on the Eastern Front may prove to be mere rumours but they are extremely significant. Such rumours are clear signs of doubt, hesitation and even despondency. The Fuehrer was so long said to be walking with the sure step of the somnambulist. Now for the first time he is seen to halt, to stumble and to retrace his way.

His Blitzkrieg has not struck the enemy mortally down. His legions have not marched to schedule. He has lost three-quarters of a million men and at least 2,500 planes. Above all, eight or nine Panzer divisions (which means nearly a third of the total armoured strength of the Reich) have been knocked out by the Russian hammerblows. The Red Army has lost its terror for those monsters on wheels and is improvising new tactics to combat them. Moscow is still far away, while winter is slowly but relentlessly approaching. The colossus that is Russia may be pressed back and still survive: but how long can the German soldiers stand the Blitzkrieg pressure themselves? There is again the unceasing bombing of Western Europe by the R. A. F. Hitler may have cleverly avoided a two-front war but those R. A. F. attacks are developing into a veritable aerial invasion of the Deutschland itself. All this does not certainly present a cheerful picture after five weeks of the cru-

sade and the Fuehrer will have to do something pretty quick about it!

From the Eastern Front to the Far East is not a far cry. Japan's occupation of Indo-China—that is what Vichy's grant of "concessions" amounts to—is a direct consequence of the latest developments of the European war. It is otherwise inconceivable that a great nation like France would not merely recognise Japan as "guardian of order in Eastern Asia" but also act as its servile stooge. The Japanese act of aggression is meant solely to further her own interests. But considerable pressure was long being exercised from Berlin over Tokyo to make of itself as much of a nuisance to the democracies as possible, if not actively to join the war. Similarly it is obvious that Vichy's cowardly behaviour was prompted by the "advice" of its Nazi masters. The hand is of Japan but the evil genius behind it is as much German as Japanese.

But why, it may be asked, should Japan move south instead of north? An attack on Siberia would have immediately and directly helped the Nazis by compelling the Soviet to fight on two fronts. Instead of this, Japan is moving further away from its Russian neighbour. Her present advance is at best of negative advantage to her Axis Ally. The answer is that the Japanese are quite hard-boiled fellows. Their late Foreign Minister has left them an unenviable legacy of high-pressure diplomacy. Just at present they are loyal friends both of Hitler and Stalin and, naturally, like good politicians they want to remain loyal—to the chap who saves his bacon! Those Russians have so far stood the Blitzkrieg alright. Why not wait a few weeks more then?

Meanwhile there is the demoralised, cringing Vichy. The Japanese have only to say the word and step wherever they want in Indo-China. That is a rich prize in itself but of more long-term value is the commanding position its occupation gives them in the Southern Pacific. China, Thailand, Netherlands, the

British Empire and the United States—all will feel the fearful impact of the Japanese entry into the ports and aerodromes of Indo-China! It does not seem likely that the Japanese warlords will begin any fire-works against their new neighbours—for the time being! One step is enough for them. After all they have waited for two long years and they can afford to wait a little more, meanwhile perfecting the defences of their new bases, which are to serve them as leaping boards for the New Order.

The issue that arises is, therefore, not so much what Japan will do next but what Britain and the United States will do. They have no legal *casus belli* if two sovereign powers arrive at a friendly settlement about each other's territory. On the other hand, the military *status quo* is very much altered in the Far East and the potential threat to the security of their own interests is greatly increased. The men of Vichy fought a bloody war for five long weeks with their late ally for the integrity of Syria, which was fast becoming a German colony. Here in Indo-China they feel no compunction of conscience in tamely surrendering the strategic bases, which will serve as a pistol aimed at Malaya, Netherlands and Phillipines. The contrast conveys its own moral.

What will Britain and U. S. do under the circumstances? They will not take any hasty steps and thus themselves put the match to the Far-Eastern powder magazine. That will be playing the Axis game. On the other hand this barefaced aggrandisement cannot be allowed to take place with impunity. Washington has already denounced Japan as an aggressor in Indo-China and President Roosevelt hinted at the immediate imposition of economic sanctions like the freezing of all Japanese assets in the United States. Britain, too, will surely fall in line with the United States but both of them will have to take subsequent steps very warily, unless Japan herself finds some "incident" to unleash the dogs of war in the Far East.

August 1, 1941

This is the hundredth week of the war. Hitler has had a merry innings so far but he now seems to be badly bogged in Russia. His Axis partner is practically bust-up, though in the Far East Japan is standing at bay.

A stalemate seems to be descending upon the Russian front. The second Nazi offensive has apparently exhausted itself and during the last week, the Fuehrer's Headquarters had no territorial gains to report. Smolensk is still in the news as the centre of the struggle and the Soviet Information Bureau persists in denying its fall. Similarly indecisive is the situation in the two other fronts, in the north and the south, in spite of the tall claims made by the German propagandists. Leningrad and Kiev are both safe yet though stronger pressure is being exerted in the latter area so as to lop off and isolate the whole of Ukraine. It is in the centre, however, that the fight is waxing fast and furious. The Soviet spokesman aptly described the Russo-German Front there as a gigantic and continuous Verdun.

Hitler has precious little to show for six weeks of intensive Blitzkrieg and it is amusing to note the tales that are being broadcast by the Berlin Radio to reassure the German public. They are being told that it was not for *Lebensraum* or for economic gains that the Fuehrer launched his crusade. No, Sir! It was to give a shattering blow to the Soviet military machine and to extirpate the threat in the rear once for all. The real enemy of the Reich, now as before, is that cursed Britain and the attack on Russia is only meant as a preliminary to the invasion of Britain. We don't want the "scorched earth" of these godless Bolsheviks. No sooner is our work of annihilation of the Red Army over than we will turn to the main agenda.

Such tales are naturally wearing pretty thin and if the situation continues as it is for a few weeks

more, it will have disastrous reactions upon the Nazi regime. Not only will their myth of military invincibility be exploded, but the repercussions on their home front will be incalculable. There is an unmistakable under-current of discontent—even despair—noticeable among the German masses. Their morale cannot be sustained any longer by empty phrases and vague promises of victories-to-come. How critical the situation has already become can be realised by the reports coming from Stockholm that a Fifth Column has long been active in Berlin. There are also authenticated tales of dissensions in the Nazi Party and the Army High Command. Goering is said to be in disgrace and Keitel, the Chief of Staff, removed from his command. The Hess episode now takes a new meaning against the present background and one need not be in the least surprised if one day a mighty explosion takes place in Germany, bringing down in red ruins the shoddy edifice of *Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Fuehrer* (One People, One Nation, One Leader).

How can such a fate be averted? By quick and resounding victories, of course. It is the consensus of expert opinion that unless the Nazi forces gain a decisive victory in at least one of the three fronts in the next few weeks, failure will be writ large on the whole campaign, howsoever long it may drag on. This in its turn will finally disintegrate the hold on the home front. Hitler is a shrewd strategist and he seems to be busy fixing a second string to his bow. I mentioned above the plan to occupy and isolate Ukraine. This will be boosted as a thumping triumph for German arms. The rich agricultural and industrial resources of Ukraine will moreover be a godsend to the impoverished Reich.

This is only part of the picture. Ukraine is not intended to be merely a consolation prize and a storehouse. It has also a strategic value for a drive to the East. Hitler's eyes are on the Caucasus and its rich oil-fields. It is very likely that instead of persisting

in his fruitless attempts to smash the Soviet centre and make a spectacular entry into Moscow, Hitler may decide to strike East. Preparations for such a flank attack are apparently well advanced. Twenty-seven German divisions are reported to be massed on the Bulgarian frontier and they are not surely sent there for a holiday. The Italian forces, too, are assembling in large numbers in the south, the obvious aim being to crush Turkish opposition in the Axis pincers. Then there are persistent rumours about the infiltration of Iran, about which both the British and Soviet Government have warned Teheran.

Will Turkey withstand the terrific pressure or will she make a virtue of necessity and allow a free passage to Nazi troops under the specious cover of the recent Turk-German pact of friendship? Her position is changed for the better since that pact was signed. Thanks to the British occupation of Syria, help is again close at hand. Above all the Soviet is no more an unknown quantity and Stalin is said to have despatched a personal letter of reassurance to President Ineunu. This ought further to fortify Turkish determination to resist all aggression and to strengthen her hands. The Germans are trying their best to overawe the Turkish Government into an acquiescent frame of mind by making a show of their might. But the Turks have eyes to see how that might is faring on the Russian battlefields and they are not likely to be cowed down as easily as the Nazis hope. Once again Turkey is occupying the centre of the strategic stage and on her attitude will depend a great deal the future developments of the war.

Turning from the stalemate of the war in Europe to the shadows of war in Asia, one feels that Japan is taken somewhat aback by the economic sanctions so swiftly, collectively and unceremoniously imposed upon her by the United States, the British Empire and the Dutch East Indies. The freezing orders may not have quite frozen her derring-do but they have

certainly succeeded in sending a chill through her spine. The air of injured innocence assumed by Japan is understandable. A bully who is accustomed always to have his way feels like that when somebody calls his bluff. During the last decade the Japs have had a free field in the Far East. They began the game with snatching a few British trousers and ended it last week by swallowing Indo-China. So long they had only to advance one foot for the European Powers (Russia excepted) to retreat two. If somebody had the cheek to protest, a bland apology was always forthcoming from Tokyo.

Last week there was neither any protest nor any demand for apology. The United States bluntly named Japan the aggressor immediately the Vichy-Tokyo deal came to light, and even before the advance Japanese air contingent landed in Saigon, the screw was applied in Washington, Batavia, London and all the subsidiary capitals of the British Empire. The era of appeasement was over and the economic war of the democracies against the Eastern end of the Axis was declared on the 26th of July 1941. It is a war all right and those who have begun it are grimly prepared for the worst. They are making their military dispositions with that supposition and apart from the huge British forces assembled in the Malay Peninsula, the United States has created a new army command under the veteran General MacArthur, who will have 75,000 American and 150,000 Filipino troops under him. Japan is left with no ground for the delusion that the present is a revised version of the sanctions farce played during the Italian war against Abyssinia. Now it is the real works. It will hurt the Japs no end, as the screw becomes tighter day by day.

Well-informed quarters in China believe that Japan will back down rather than risk a war against major powers. The Chinese know their Tokyo friends rather too well and we must treat this opinion with respect. But will Japan back down? Can she do so at

all at this stage? If once the backing process begins, she will have to clear out bag and baggage not only from Indo-China but China and Manchukuo itself! Her New Order will be still-born. Far from becoming the leader of Asiatic nations, she will be the outcast of the civilised world. Japan will be a Land not of the Rising but of the Setting Sun. Only two courses now remain open to the Nipponese War-Lords. Either to go ahead with the career of aggression and damn the consequences or to sit tight for the present on what they have grabbed and watch the developments. In other words, Tokyo will not start the shooting itself. It merely says to the democracies *j'y suis j'y reste!* And, what are you going to do about it, please?

The A.B.C.D. Front will have to decide pretty quick what to do about it. Having gone so far, they too cannot retrace their steps. Tokyo has already started to throw tentative feelers towards Thailand under the guise of trade pacts. The Bangkok Government has taken an immediate occasion to stress its scrupulous neutrality but so did Rumania and Bulgaria before they passed into the Nazi orbit. Besides it is notorious that Japan wields a great influence over the army and navy officers of Thailand, many of whom were trained in the Tokyo military and naval academy. Japan today is verily a nation at bay. That is not a frame of mind which conduces to moderation or reason, and it may well lead any moment to fire-works.

August 8, 1941

There is a lull in the military situation in the Eastern Front as also in the political situation in the Far East. It looks like the proverbial lull before the storm. An intensive manouevring for positions has been going on for the last week behind the scenes from Smolensk to Singapore and from Washington

to Tokyo. Viewed in this light, even Churchill's mystery visit to Roosevelt appears less as a sensation in itself than as a prelude to some startling developments in the near future. We seem to be on the eve of another climacteric of war.

There is a saying that one who excuses himself, accuses himself. That is exactly what has happened to Hitler's wanton invasion of Russia. Seven out of the ten weeks in which the eastern operations were to be brought to a victorious conclusion are already over. The Nazis have not yet captured Moscow, nor Leningrad, nor Kiev, which they claimed to have approached almost a month ago. What the German Panzer divisions failed to achieve, the Berlin propaganda broadcasts are trying to explain away. Territory is now said to be of no importance to the Nazis. The very stubborn resistance of the latter so far is held as "a striking proof of the degree to which Soviet military power constitutes a military danger to Germany and Europe".

The myrmidons of Dr. Goebbels are indeed excelling themselves in the stories they are disseminating in order to allay public apprehension in the Reich. Why has it taken such an unconscionably long time for the matchless German army to defeat the Soviet? Because the Russians—darn them!—fight long after they were clearly, demonstrably and hopelessly defeated, thus forcing the Germans to continue the process of physical destruction. This is excellent. But the catechism does not end here. Its brilliant author proceeds:—Bolshevism has killed the souls and religion of Russians. They did not, therefore, fear physical death and what comes after death. This Eastern war, he added, was an endless killing!

Not of the Russians alone, however! They are giving as good as they receive and the real explanation of the deadlock on the eastern front lies in this that the Germans have had to pay heavily for every

inch of their advance on the Russian soil. The Soviet Information Bureau puts the casualties at a million and a half. Two independent American observers assessed them (on the basis of incontrovertible evidence from German official sources) at one million killed, wounded or captured for the first three weeks of fighting alone. The Fuehrer is lavish with human fodder. This terrible holocaust must have nevertheless told even upon this twentieth century Attila. We must note in this connection that it was the cream of the Reischwehr, the crack S.S. regiments and the flower of the mechanized forces which have suffered the most grievous losses in the present campaign—losses which will prove literally irreparable.

It is those losses which really account for the deadlock on the Eastern front. The Nazis may make a virtue of necessity and profess that their real plan is not to advance on Moscow but to encircle Ukraine and to strike towards the Caucasus. But this is at best a secondary and subsidiary plan and its adoption will be a virtual confession of the failure of the invasion. It is likely that the Nazis may make one last Herculean effort to lift their war machine out of the bog in which it has floundered and to drive it to the Russian capital. Hitler has still mighty resources at his disposal and he may risk them all on one gigantic gamble—and pull it off as he has done so often in the past.

But if he fails, it will mark the turn of the tide for him. Then it will be the beginning of the end of the Nazi Empire. American military authorities are already suggesting that Hitler is licked. He lost the air war last year when the Luftwaffe was decisively defeated in British skies. So far, however, he was supreme on land and was almost deemed invincible. If the Russians hold grimly for another few weeks, they will be helped by autumn rains and after that by the dreaded snows of winter. There will not be a chance left for him thereafter and the

end of the war will be within a measurable distance of time. Naturally Hitler will not relish such a prospect and he will try his utmost to get out of the present bog. That is why one should be prepared for a savage storm to follow the present lull.

As on the Eastern Front, so also in the Far East. There is an apparent stillness in the atmosphere there, too. But it is temporary and it is deceptive. Japan is still protesting her innocence and loudly complaining that her intentions are very much misunderstood by the world at large and by the United States particularly. Simultaneously she is quietly making her preparations and dispositions with an eye on all eventualities. Her occupation of the bases in Indo-China is now complete, and it is significant that some of those outposts lie right on the Thailand—Indo-China frontier. Not only that but a new naval and air base is also reported to be under construction in the Toule Sap sector.

The meaning of this proximity is not lost upon Thailand, where a new "realistic" outlook is dawning, as it dawned upon the Balkan States when Hitler's big battalions were massed on the borders. The Thai Government is vainly underlining its good relations with all her neighbours and it has also made a gesture of moving its own forces to the border. Unfortunately it will be no more than a gesture. The grant of a sixteen million Yen credit by the Thai Banking Syndicate to the Yokohama Specie Bank is an unmistakable economic pointer to the political dominance of Tokyo over Bangkok. There are also reports that a demand is being made for a virtual monopoly of Thai rubber, tin and rice in exchange for territorial concessions.

Will the new "realistic" outlook persuade Thailand to enrol herself as a member of the "New Order" in the Far East? Or will she fight for her national integrity? In either case her lot appears extremely

unenviable. She knows perfectly well what Japan will do if there is the least resistance to her diplomatic pressure. On the other hand both the United States and Britain have now made it perfectly plain what their reactions will be if Thailand compromises her independent status in any way. The categorical and concurrent manner in which both Mr. Anthony Eden and Mr. Cordell Hull spoke on this issue shows that the A.B.C.D. front has definitely made up its mind to face whatever situation confronts them in the South Pacific. The democracies have at last become wise to the technique of totalitarian aggression. They are not likely to wait for any formal declaration of hostilities. If Japan moves into Thailand, so will they. The fact that the Singapore office of the Ministry of Information should proclaim that all preparations are ready to smash any Japanese attempt to cut the Burma Road or move further westwards is a clear indicator that the days of kid-glove diplomacy are over.

It is hinted that Japan may strike at Russia in view of those developments in the south. There have been well-authenticated reports of heavy troop movements towards the north and the Japanese garrisons in Manchukuo and northern Korea are said to be considerably reinforced now. These preparations need not necessarily be of an offensive nature however. Japan will not move in Siberia unless she knows for certain that the Soviet is cracking up. Russia is quite prepared for all developments. Her Far Eastern army is highly efficient and thoroughly independent. As many as 30 divisions were so long garrisoned in Siberia and even if a few of them are now moved to the west, there is a sufficiently large force still left to pick up the Japanese gauntlet. The present lull in the Far East will last just as long as it takes Japan to make up her mind whether to strike south or north.

August 15, 1941

"Where is Churchill?"—The question was being asked in five continents for the last few days, first with curiosity, then with surprise and latterly with evident anxiety. All sorts of fantastic guesses were being indulged in regarding his whereabouts. He was said to be in Moscow, Iceland, Washington, here, there and everywhere. For a few days Winston Churchill had become the Scarlet Pimpernel of high politics.

Just when the suspense was becoming intolerable came the announcement broadcast by Mr. Clement Attlee on Thursday evening. The Deputy Premier did not divulge where his Chief was but he informed an eager world what he was doing. In brief, the Prime Minister of Britain was on a visit to the President of the United States and both of them were busy laying down the blue-prints of a new world order. Even in peaceful times a meeting of the Premier and the President would have attracted world-wide attention. Now it will go down as one of the major sensations of the war. The secrecy enveloping Churchill's departure, the dramatic coming together of the heads of the two States somewhere on the submarine-infested high seas, the fact that they were accompanied by their respective heads of the services and finally the historic declaration that they have issued—all these will by themselves constitute a thrilling chapter in the annals of 1941.

The eight-point statement issued jointly by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom (Note the careful wording) makes known "certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world." The statement is a belated response to the demand for war aims which has been frequently made since the hostilities began. So far the British Govern-

ment considered that victory was the chief aim of the war. It is very significant, therefore, that Churchill should have now undertaken such a perilous voyage in order to confer with President Roosevelt before enunciating the principles for which the Allies are fighting.

Those principles are in themselves unexceptionable. There is nothing very novel about them either. President Roosevelt had long ago outlined the Four Freedoms which he held as the basis of post-war reconstruction. But it is one thing to lay down abstract principles and another to translate them into action. The proof of the pudding lies in the eating. The eight points of Churchill and Roosevelt naturally remind one of the famous Fourteen Points of President Wilson. The former may not be an abridged edition of the latter but they are a variant of the same theme. In the history of World War I, the Fourteen Points have an honoured place for themselves. Their enunciation by President Wilson more than the actual participation of the United States in the war was responsible for the collapse of the German resistance.

Will the Churchill-Roosevelt declaration have a similar immediate result? I am afraid, no. Paradoxical as it may seem, if those war aims (personally I would prefer to call them Peace Aims,) come belatedly for the democratic people, they are premature as far as the Totalitarian Powers are concerned. Hitler's Reich has certainly not reached the stage in which Kaiser's Reich found itself at the beginning of 1918. The German people are yet under the hypnotic spell of their Fuehrer. The latter's Eastern campaign may not be fulfilling all his expectations but he has still a powerful ally in the Far East. There is, again, a world of difference in the generation of 1918 and that of 1941. We are realistic, cynical, hardboiled. We have seen the Versailles Frankenstein rising out of the lofty idealism of the Fourteen Points. We have seen self-determination become a mockery. The League of

Nations gradually turned out to be an empty shell and the years between 1918 and 1939 proved to be only an uneasy era of armistice between two deadly armageddons.

While heartily welcoming the Churchill-Roosevelt declaration, one must, therefore, also note its sombre background. The principles which they lay down are excellent; but still better will be their application. The fact that the President of the United States shares the authorship of the proposed New Order is of the highest significance in this connection. The New World is lending a hand once again to putting the affairs of the Old One aright and there is every hope that both Churchill and Roosevelt will profit by the mistakes of their predecessors. And there lies the real triumph of Churchill. He has brought the United States back to Europe. The Atlantic is no longer a gulf that divides but a bridge that unites the peoples of the two continents. As the *New York Times* says, "This is the end of isolation. We are at the beginning of a new era in which the United States assumes responsibilities which fall naturally to a great world power."

This means in effect that the United States has entered the war so as to safeguard the peace that will follow the war. It may sound like a contradiction in terms, an insoluble conundrum, but so it is. The last war was to end war; this one will be henceforth waged to preserve the peace. The former was meant to make the world safe for democracy; the latter to root out dictatorship from the world once for all. Perhaps the most pertinent clause in the declaration is the last one suggesting the disarmament of the aggressor nations. That is the summit and there lies the sting of the peace offensive launched by Churchill and Roosevelt. Britain and the U.S.A. are virtually assuming the policeman's powers in the new international order, at the same time solemnly disclaiming any perquisites for themselves.

Whatever one may have to say about the contents of the declaration, there cannot be two opinions about its timing. Churchill is a political maestro. He has a great sense of the dramatic. And in meeting Roosevelt and broadcasting his New Order plans he has kept just one step ahead of Hitler. He has taken the wind out of the Nazis' own New Order. That New Order was to be inaugurated in Europe with a fanfare of trumpets immediately the German army had brought the Russian colossus to its knees. The stooges and satellites had already fallen in line with the New Order. Last week Marshal Petain, too, finally and formally aligned himself to Totalitarianism. Everything is ready for the Nazi hegemony over Europe. The Soviet, however, refuses to oblige its erstwhile ally. It is yet fighting grimly and as long as Stalin is in the ring, Hitler cannot usher in his ersatz peace.

Churchill has, therefore, seized time by the forelock. He has spiked the guns of the Fuehrer's peace offensive in advance. One would have wished that Stalin also were associated with the Churchill-Roosevelt announcement. That would have invested it with a greater international sanction if not with a higher ideological appeal. Much water, however, has flown down the Thames, the Mississippi and the Volga during the last two months and one is confident that the declaration will be received with sympathy and support in the Kremlin. At any rate there will be no longer that distrust and suspicion, which would have been unavoidable before June 22, 1941. And it is perhaps as well therefore that the war aims of the Allies were not proclaimed so long.

*August 22, 1941*

The ninth week of the Russo-German war has proved a critical one for the gallant defenders. The third Nazi offensive is reaching its fierce climax and the Soviet forces have been forced

to fall back on the whole 2,000 mile front. The situation is causing considerable anxiety both in the north and in the south.

Odessa is already encircled on all sides except the sea, while Leningrad is being gradually isolated. The latest German High Command communique claims the occupation of Kherson, a hundred miles east of Odessa, and of Novogorod, Narva and Kingisepp, which were so long blocking its way to Leningrad. Both those towns have now become the cynosure of the eyes of the Russians and also of their sympathisers throughout the world. Their value to the Soviet—geographical, strategical, industrial and moral—cannot be exaggerated and both will now receive the full fury of the Blitzkrieg. Both of them are heavily fortified and especially Leningrad has been long treasured as the apple of the Red Army's eye. Marshal Voroshilov's stirring call to the people to defend the city "with guns and their hands" shows the desperate determination of the Soviet forces to fight to the bitter end.

Similarly in Odessa, the garrison is sternly resisting the attacks by land, sea and air. The ceaseless dive-bombing, to which it has been subjected for the last few days, has not sapped its morale and it is being aptly called a Russian Tobruk. It can be trusted to hold on grimly as long as the Russian fleet in the Black Sea can carry supplies to the beleagured population. The Nazis seem to have found another weak spot in Gomel, which is admitted to have been evacuated by the Russians. It is likely that the Germans will sweep south-east towards Kharkov from there and thus occupy the whole of the Western Ukraine. It will have given them the command of one of the richest parts of the Soviet and at last Hitler will have something to show for two months of the most bloody war of history. The situation is thus admittedly grave for Russia, even if we discount the fantastic claims made by the Nazi propagandists. The Red

Army has suffered enormously and everywhere it has given ground. Roughly speaking, the Nazis are now masters of the entire Russian territory lying west of a straight line drawn from Leningrad in the north-west to Kherson in the south-east. The third offensive, like the first and unlike the second, has borne fruit and the Blitzkrieg has now reached the crest of its wave.

There is no occasion, however, for undue apprehension or gloomy forebodings. Take a map of Russia and see what proportion the surrendered territory bears to the whole country. The occupied areas are a huge stretch of scorched earth and the invaders have gained precious little booty: the reported destruction of the world-famous Dneiper dam shows the sheer fanaticism which actuates the defenders of the Soviet. Moreover, there are numerous pockets of resistance still left in the surrendered districts which are serving as so many thorns in the Nazi side. Howsoever grievous the losses of the Russians themselves might be, they have taken an equally heavy toll of the enemy. According to the official estimates, the Germans have suffered nearly two million casualties in the first two months of war. As M. Lozovsky of the Soviet Observation Bureau observed yesterday, "Never in history has an army been known to suffer such losses in such a short time. Commensurate with this human carnage is the loss of *materiel*. It has been computed that even if the Germans are victorious, they will require one whole year to make good their losses in guns, tanks and aeroplanes and to re-equip their mechanised forces. It must be remembered again that the Russians were caught unprepared and unawares and that they have borne the brunt of the Blitzkrieg alone. The Germans, on the other hand, have drawn upon the man-power of half-a-dozen servile nations and in the southern front more than 40 divisions drawn from Italy, Hungary,

Rumania and Slovakia are serving under von Rundstedt, the Nazi Commander-in-Chief.

We must also take with a big pinch of salt those stories of encirclement and subsequent annihilation of Russian armies. However behind their opposites the Soviet Generals may be in their arms and equipment, they hold their own against them as far as strategy is concerned. Again and again they have cleverly extricated their troops from the repeated pincer grips of the Nazis. Nowhere have they allowed themselves to be encircled in any large numbers or outwitted. Both Marshal Voroshilov and Marshal Budenny, for example, have escaped the enveloping tactics of von Leeb and von Rundstedt respectively and whatever garrisons remain in Leningrad and Odessa are left there deliberately. The Soviet High Command shows not the least sign of despair, much less of demoralization. The very fact that Berlin is being almost daily bombed by the Soviet Air Force shows the fine fettle and offensive spirit of the Russians. Without trying to minimise either the extent or the vital importance of the areas evacuated by the Soviet, one may point out that, thanks to the foresight of Stalin, Russia need not be industrially crippled in spite of the loss of the Ukraine. There are now thriving and well-equipped factories in the Urals and the Caucasus, which can keep the Soviet war machine going for a long time yet.

Summing up the present strategic position of Russia we find that (A) The Red Army is still intact as a fighting machine, whatever casualties it may have suffered. (B) Far from being demoralised like Petain and Weygand in June 1940, Voroshilov, Timoshenko and Budenny (not to talk of Stalin himself) are full of fight at the end of August 1941. (C) The Red Army can still rely for its equipment on its own industries deep in the heart of the country, apart from the fact that (D) Supplies will be available now

in ever-increasing magnitude from Britain as well as the United States. This was one of the main items on the Churchill-Roosevelt agenda. (E) The Red Army can draw upon unlimited man-power—and even woman-power! High morale is as the very breath of their life. (F) Finally, there are plenty of vast, open spaces for the Red Army to retreat. There is no reason, therefore, to dither at the tidal wave of last week's German successes. One is conscious of the terrible hitting power of Hitler. But as Stalin said in his broadcast some weeks ago, there has never been anything like an invincible army in history. So well-informed and shrewd an observer as President Roosevelt recently expressed his confidence that the Russians will carry on through winter. It is indeed revealed that the United States Government is now busy making arrangements for supplies to Russia during the next spring!

But will Hitler himself be able to carry on at the present rate of casualties till then? One wonders. He has already been compelled to halt once to take second wind and he cannot go on pouring blood and (what is more precious to him!) oil in the present reckless fashion for ever. It is very likely, therefore, that once he captures Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa, Hitler will constitute the Ukraine as a new independent State under Axis wings and make a gesture of calling off the Russian campaign, as he did after his Polish victory. That will be the moment for calling a 'Grand Conference' to declare the ceremonial inauguration of the United States of Europe, with himself as its Supreme Fuehrer! Italy, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Finland, Croatia, Slovakia, the new Ukraine and the old Vichy will all be there to hail and acclaim him! The Red Army is in being still, however. The Soviet resistance shows no signs of cracking. Can Hitler deal it a mortal blow before General Winter comes to help Comrade Stalin?

*August 29, 1941*

We are approaching the end of the tenth week of Hitler's campaign against Russia and of the second year of Hitler's war upon the world. The end of this month ought to have made him, according to his revised time-table, the Nazi Czar of Russia. His original scheduled programme of proclaiming himself the Fuehrer of Germanised Europe from the hallowed vault of Westminster Abbey has of course been discreetly shelved long since.

Hitler may not have missed the bus; but so far he has not caught it either. He is racing after the bus and he is racing against time. He has been promising peace to his people for more than a year now. A year ago he assured them that they would not have to suffer the cold and privation of another winter. A year ago the Battle of Britain was being waged as furiously as the Battle of Russia is being waged today. The Luftwaffe was raining death and destruction upon the halls and hamlets of Britain as the Panzer Divisions are spreading them in the farms and factories of the Soviet at present. A year ago Britain singed the wings of the Luftwaffe and compelled Goering to retire in disgrace. Hitler decisively lost the Battle of Britain and had to hibernate throughout the last winter. Another winter is in the offing now—the dreaded winter of Russia which sent Napoleon's armies shivering to their doom. Hitler's Blitzkrieg specialists are feverishly trying to break the back of Soviet resistance. It must be admitted that they have won considerable territorial success so far; but the deeper the mechanised units penetrate, the tougher becomes the defence. Irresistible force is hurling itself in vain against immovable mass. A riddle of physics has become the phase. The present position is critical still but it is in

A week ago Russia was passing through a critical phase. The present position is critical still but it is in a congealed form. The southern front remains very

active with the Nazi forces striking as far east as Dne-propetrovsk. In the north the situation appears stabilised during the last week and round Leningrad—the beloved "Peter", the cradle of the revolution and the apple of the Red Army's eye—are being thrown concentric rings of death-defying defence. The city is not isolated and supplies are being rushed to it. From the slow pace of the Nazi advance towards their prized objective, it is evident that they entertain a lively respect for the defenders. Unlike Rundstedt, Leeb is proceeding very cautiously. In the centre, far from being disheartened and disorganised by the fall of Gomel, Marshal Timoshenko's troops launched a spirited counter-offensive last week. Its precise results are not yet known but it has riled the Nazis no end and compelled them to rush reinforcements from the south. Even if the counter-offensive shows no actual gain, its moral value is obvious.

If the situation remains critical for Russia, it is gradually bound to become more so for the Germans. If they are to gain any decision they must do so during the next two months before the weather breaks. They must either annihilate the Russian armies soon or condemn themselves to a death by attrition later on. The Russians, on the other hand, are playing for time and the longer the war continues, the surer becomes their ultimate success. The Nazis, therefore, may be trusted to mount a fourth offensive on all the three fronts as soon as they can, even if their third one may have passed its peak now. Leningrad, Moscow and Odessa represent the three mighty bastions of Soviet defence and the Germans are at present within hailing distance of each of them, so to say. In the north, they claim to have cut the Moscow-Leningrad railway line; they also claim to have captured Velkiye Luki, an important junction on the Riga-Moscow line. Both those claims, if true, will cause considerable concern—the first for obvious reasons and the second because the Germans will have thereby driven a wedge between the armies

of Voroshilov and Timoshenko. One of the main aims of Nazi strategy is to isolate the three Russian commanders and attack them piecemeal. So long however the Russians may have retreated, they have kept an unbroken, continuous front from the Arctic to the Black Sea. That is why the pincer tactics of the Nazis have failed so far. The latest slogan of the German General Staff seems to be to isolate the three Russian Commanders before annihilating their respective armies.

Supposing, however, that this grand frontal assault does not bring any decisive results during the next few weeks, what are the Nazis likely to do? Will they prepare for a prolonged winter siege and merely sit tight on their new frontier until the next spring? The present scorched earth will then have been covered with blistering snows. The Nazis will have to transport from their distant home bases not only arms and ammunition, but food as well as fuel for their garrisons and their very barracks, tents being practically useless in the Russian winter. All the while they will not only have to resist the ceaseless pressure of the Russian army on the front but will have constantly to contend with the guerillas sitting on their back. How serious the latter's threat has become to the German troops can be realised by the fact that the Nazis have already revised their Blitzkrieg tactics. Now the advance Panzer units do not push merrily into the interior as they did in France. They have got a salutary dread of the guerillas and dare not now venture too far ahead of the main army. The whole solid phalanx of infantry now marches immediately behind the mechanised spearhead. The Germans are famous as the world's finest organisers and already they have considerably solved the transport problem by changing the gauge of the Russian rails. This is the secret behind Rundstedt's rapid advance in the Ukraine during the last two weeks. The question that will worry them in the future is, however, not

how to transport but what to transport to feed the gargantuan garrisons sprawling across a whole continent. Hitler invaded Russia not to exterminate Bolshevism but to grab the Soviet's wheat, oil and ores. His present "Blood and Iron" cry springs from his gnawing thirst and hunger. After a few months there will be precious little left in Germany itself to carry to Russia.

The Germans would be content to occupy the rich Ukraine and to exploit it peacefully. The former is possible but the latter is impossible until the whole U.S.S.R. is brought to its knees in abject surrender. The fanatical Kulaks and workers are fighting for their Fatherland and they consider no sacrifice or suffering too great if they can thereby harass and injure the enemy. The Chinese "scorched earth" is nothing as compared to what we are witnessing in Russia at present. The men and women of the Soviet are destroying whatever they constructed with the sweat of their brows during the twenty years of Revolution, so as not to allow it to fall in the enemy's hands. If, therefore, Hitler fails to reach a head-on decision during the next few weeks, he will go on pushing towards the east until he strikes his richest objective—the oil-wells of the Caucasus. If he cannot destroy the armies of Voroshilov and Timoshenko, he will keep them pinned down to where they are and pursue Budenny beyond the Dneiper and the Don until he reaches distant Baku. It is a long, long trail, however, and that too through the Soviet territory, every inch of which will claim its toll of blood and oil. And almost round the corner is winter stretching its icy hand to grip the neck of the Nazi legions. The Fuehrer can circumvent time and space by marching through Turkey, which provides him with the shortest route to his destination. For many weeks now we have been hearing news of heavy concentration of troops and *materiel* in the Bulgarian towns and ports. There are also reports of feverish Italian activity in the Aegean Isles. One

should not be at all surprised, therefore, if the Axis makes demands upon Ankara for the passage of troops, as a bye-product of the Turco-German Pact of Friendship. Turkey will resist—may not resist. It is for the Turks to decide.

Here exactly falls into the proper strategic perspective the joint military action taken by the British and Soviet Governments in Iran last week. The German Fifth Column penetration of Iran, whatever its nature and extent, constituted an alarming threat to the Soviet, to the British position in the Middle and Near East and even to Turkey. It had to be nipped in the bud in sheer self-preservation by Britain—who has had bitter experience of this Trojan Horse technique during the last two years—and more so by the Soviet. The latter, apart from the imperious necessity of war, could claim a valid excuse for intervention in the terms of the Russo-Iran Treaty of 1921. Both the Governments made it very clear at the outset that they were not at war with Iran and that their action was directed exclusively against its German guests. Both guaranteed the territorial integrity and independence of Iran. These explicit declarations and the far-seeing statesmanship shown by Reza Shah, apart from the overwhelming force marshalled by the Allies, have fortunately succeeded in avoiding any sanguinary developments. It may be trusted that mutual goodwill will be helpful in arriving at an amicable understanding between Iran and the Allies, though the latter will naturally insist upon occupying the strategic bases in the country for the duration of war.

Iraq, Syria and now Iran. This is the third occasion when Britain has taken the initiative, has kept one step ahead of the Nazis and beaten them at their own game. By her timely action she has preserved the peace and assured her own strategic position in the East. Hitler was anticipated in all these countries and every time he had to let down his witting or unwit-

ting dupes. Dr. Grobba, Germany's Eastern Emissary-in-Chief since the last war, has the ground cut from under his feet now. He is without a job. The British bastion in the Middle East is safe. Of more imminent import than that is the fact that Russia's south-eastern flank is now secure. The Soviet Government was extremely anxious about the Nazi tentacles spreading surreptitiously from Iran into the heart of the Caucasus and I believe that their's was the main urge behind the developments of the last week. Turkey's rear, too, is now considerably strengthened and she is strategically far better situated to stand up to the Nazis than she was a week ago.

The most outstanding outcome of last week's events is that Britain and Soviet are now in contact with each other. So far geography came between them and symbolically enough they met only in the sky over Berlin. Now the Soviet and British forces can shake hands in the plains of Iran. The Allied land front now stretches in a huge semi-circle from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, while the Atlantic has long since become an Anglo-American lake. Encirclement has been the neurotic excuse for every aggression committed by Hitler since he rose to power. At the end of two years of war he seems to be really encircled at last. He yet retains his terrific hitting power but the initiative is gradually passing out of his hands. In the many countries occupied by him, discontent is slowly growing as the shooting of Laval two days ago unmistakably shows, and it will take only a major German defeat for the flames of this discontent to be fanned into an open revolt.

Hitler began the war two years ago but in spite of the succession of victories he does not yet know when he will end it. And perhaps he has already begun to wonder whether it will end him!

September 3, 1941

Eight days ago the clouds of war were sailing perilously near Indian skies. For a moment the war had almost come to India. Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta were within easy bombing distance of hostile aircraft based in Kerman, Meshed or Teheran.

Fortunately, those ugly clouds quickly melted away. But the shadow of Mars still falls across India as everywhere else on the face of the earth. Whether we like it or not, the inexorable facts of geography put India right in the centre of the present strategic stage, as is obvious from the fact that General Sir Archibald Wavell, Britain's most outstanding military figure in the present war, has been sent at this juncture to what was so long a secondary command. The "Wizard of the Western Desert" has not come here to cool his heels in the snows of the Himalayas. The capital of India has become the pivot of the defence of a dozen Allied nations.

Freedom and Fascism are locked to-day in a mortal combat on the Eastern Front in Europe. Its result will have a decisive bearing not merely on the history of this war but on the future of humanity. In the Far East stands Japan at bay, committed to its "immutable policy" but cautiously watching the course of the Russian campaign of its Axis partner. We are situated between those two theatres of hostilities, the first big with fate, the second grim with threat.

The war came to India two years ago. Will war come to India?

## A DIARY OF THE WAR

1939

September 1. Germany Invades Poland.  
3. Britain and France declare war on Germany.  
17 Russia invades Poland.  
27. Warsaw surrenders after heroic resistance.  
29. The partition of Poland between Germany and Russia.

October 6. Hitler outlines his "last peace offer".  
19. Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance signed.

November 2. Arms Embargo repealed by U.S.A.  
30. Russia Invades Finland.  
17. "Graf Spee" is scuttled off Montevideo.

1940

January 5. Mr. Hore-Belisha, War Secretary, resigns.

February 17. Rescue of British prisoners from the German "Hell ship" "Altmark".  
26. Russians penetrate right flank of Mannerheim Line.

March 13. Russo-Finnish Peace Treaty signed in Moscow.  
20. M. Daladier resigns. M. Reynaud becomes French Premier.

April 8. Allies mine Norwegian waters.  
9. Germany occupies Denmark and invades Norway.  
10. Naval battle of Narvik.  
15. British forces land in Norway.

May 3. Norwegian Commander-in-Chief leaves Namsos with Allied troops, who finally withdraw from Norway.  
10. Germany invades Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg.  
Chamberlain resigns. Churchill forms new government.

May            15. Dutch Commander-in-Chief surrenders.  
               German forces penetrate French frontier at Sedan.  
19. General Gamelin is dismissed and succeeded by General Weygand.  
22. German forces reach Boulogne and Abbeville.  
28. King Leopold of Belgium capitulates.

June            3. The evacuation of 335,000 troops from Dunkirk completed.  
10. Italy declares war on Britain and France.  
14. Germans enter Paris.  
16. M. Reynaud resigns.  
17. Marshal Petain, new French Premier, asks for armistice.  
23. Franco-German armistice signed.  
27. Russia occupies Bessarabia and north Bukovina.  
28. Britain recognises General de Gaulle as leader of the Free French.

July            1. Rumania denounces British guarantee.  
4. Seizure of French navy and the action at Oran announced by Churchill.  
23. Baltic States join the Soviet.

August          6. Italian forces invade British Somaliland.  
30. Rumania cedes half of Transylvania to Hungary.

September      2. Anglo-American Naval Treaty signed in Washington. Britain to get 50 United States Destroyers in exchange for naval and air bases in Atlantic.  
6. King Carol of Rumania abdicates in favour of his son. General Antonescu becomes the "Conducator".  
15. Italian forces cross Egyptian territory and occupy an escarpment of Sollum.

September 23. Vichy Government hands over bases in French China to Japan. Italian troops advance to Sidi Barrani.

24. General de Gaulle invades Dakar but is compelled to retire.

27. Germany, Italy and Japan sign a ten-year military, political and economic pact.

October 9. The Premier announces that the Burma Road will be opened on the 17th inst.

20. Yugoslavia signs Trade Pact with Germany.

28. Italy invades Greece.

November 5. Roosevelt elected third-term President of the U.S.A.

12. M. Molotov's visit to Berlin.

13. Iatlian Navy receives a crippling blow in Taranto Harbour.

16. The Italian forces retreat from Greek territory.

18. British bases in West Indies leased to United States.

22. Koritza captured by Greek forces.

December 8. General Wavell launches offensive in the Western Desert.

10. Sidi Barrani captured.

15. British troops penetrate Italian territory, occupying Sollum and Fort Capuzzo.

18. President Roosevelt outlines Lease and Lend Plan to aid Britain.

23. Greeks capture Chimarra.

### 1941

January 3. Bardia surrenders.

10. Greeks occupy Klissura.

19. Kassala reoccupied by British troops.

22. Fall of Tobruk.

24. Emperor Haile Selassie and British forces enter Abyssinia.

January      29. Death of General Metaxas.  
              30. Derna captured.

February     2. Barentu occupied by British forces.  
              7. Benghazi occupied.  
              9. El Agheila captured.  
        10. Britain withdraws its Minister from Rumania.  
      17. Turco-Bulgarian Non-Aggression Pact signed.  
      25. British troops capture Mogadishu.

March        2. "Friendly" German troops enter Bulgaria.  
              5. Britain breaks relations with Bulgaria.  
      11. President Roosevelt signs the Lease and Lend Bill.  
      16. Greeks smash Italian offensive in Albania.  
      24. The whole of British Somaliland reoccupied.  
      25. Yugoslavia joins the Axis.  
      26. Nazi forces capture El Agheila.  
      27. Bloodless revolution in Yugoslavia. The Boy King Peter takes over the reins of government. Keren and Harrar fall.  
      30. Naval Battle of Cape Matapan.

April        1. Asmara, capital of Eritrea, falls.  
              3. Benghazi evacuated by British forces.  
              4. Rashid Ali seizes power in Iraq.  
              6. Germany invades Greece and Yugoslavia.  
                   British forces occupy Addis Ababa.  
              8. Massawa capitulates.  
              9. German troops enter Salonika.  
      10. United States establishes bases in Greenland.  
      11. Germans enter Bardia.  
      13. Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact signed.  
      14. Germans capture Sollum.  
                   Yugoslavian resistance ceases.  
      21. Mount Olympus evacuated.  
      23. Greek forces in Macedonia surrender.  
      27. Nazis enter Athens.

April            30. Evacuation of British forces from Greece completed.

May            2. Fighting starts between the Iraqui and British forces.  
5. Haile Selassie returns in triumph to Addis Ababa.  
10. Rudolf Hess, Nazi No. Three, lands in Scotland.  
19. Surrender of the Italian garrison at Amba Alagi.  
20. Nazi paratroops invade Crete.  
27. President Roosevelt proclaims a state of Unlimited National Emergency.  
30. Rashid Ali flees from Iraq. The Regent Emir Abdul Illah returns and forms new government.

June            31. British troops withdraw from Crete.  
8. British and Free French forces invade Syria.  
18. Turco-German Treaty of Friendship signed.  
20. Damascus captured.  
22. German army invades Russia.  
27. Nazi forces cross the 1939 frontier of Russia.

July            2. M. Stalin's broadcast to Russian people. Battle of Bialystok.  
7. United States Marines occupy Iceland.  
8. Germans claim to have broken the Stalin Line.  
9. Whole of Bessarabia occupied by German and Rumanian troops.  
12. Syrian armistice signed.  
13. Anglo-Soviet Pact of Assistance signed.  
16. Japanese Cabinet resigns. Konoye forms new cabinet.  
19. Germans capture Novograd-Volynsk.  
25. Vichy hands over naval and military bases in Indo-China to Japan.

- 26. The British and United States governments freeze Japanese assets.
- 30. Russo-Polish Treaty signed in London.

August

- 5. Germans claim capture of Ostrov, Porkhov and Pskov in the north; that they have reached the gates of Kiev; and that they have successfully concluded the battle of Smolensk.
- 12. Petain proclaims a Fascist form of Government for France.
- 14. Announcement of Roosevelt-Churchill meeting somewhere in the Atlantic. A joint eight-point declaration of war aims issued.
- 18. Germans capture Krivoi Rog and Nikolaev. Soviet forces evacuate Kingisepp.
- 22. Russians evacuate Gomel.
- 25. British and Soviet Governments take joint military action in Iran.
- 28. New Cabinet orders "Cease Fire" in Iran.
- 29. Nazis claim capture of Tallinn and the cutting of the Moscow-Leningrad railway.
- 30. Finns claim capture of Viborg.

September

- 1. British and Soviet forces meet at Kazvin in Iran.
- 2. Rumours of an imminent German attack on Turkey. 16 Axis divisions reported to be massed on Turkish frontier.

The Nazis claim the penetration of the outer defences of Leningrad and Odessa.